

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF J.K. ROWLING

Rowling's father was an aircraft mechanic and her mother was a science technician. She was the first of two children and has said that she was a very unhappy teen: her mother suffered from multiple sclerosis and her relationship with her father was strained. She graduated from the University of Exeter in 1986 and then worked as a researcher and a secretary in London. She conceived of the first Harry Potter book in 1990 and began to write immediately. Rowling's mother died in December of that year, and Rowling channeled much of her grief into the novel. Over the next few years, Rowling married, had her first daughter, divorced, and signed up for welfare benefits. She finished *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in 1995 and after its publication in 1997, Rowling began her rise to fame. The proceeds from the U.S. auction for the publishing rights allowed Rowling to buy a flat in Edinburgh and over the next ten years, Rowling wrote and published the next six books in the series. She also remarried in 2001 and had two more children. In 2004 she became the first billionaire to make her fortune writing books, though her donations to charity mean that she's since lost her billionaire status. She's published several crime novels under the pen name Robert Galbraith and has written the screenplays for the films in the *Fantastic Beasts* franchise.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

While the Wizarding world is entirely fictional, Rowling draws on a number of historical events and practices to build and expand Harry's world. The rise of Voldemort and his Death Eaters (and in particular, their insistence on promoting a world made up of pure-blooded wizards only) mimics that of the Nazis in Germany in the early 20th century. Rowling has admitted that Cornelius Fudge and the Ministry in this book are modeled after Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of England, in the years before World War II. Like Fudge does with Voldemort, Chamberlain tried to ignore Hitler's rise to power and avoid going to war, ultimately without success. The house-elves', goblins', and giants' situations and desire for rights and recognition draws on the history of chattel slavery (in the case of the house-elves) and, more generally, on the historical and current practice of white society discriminating against minorities through both formal and informal channels. It's also worth noting that Umbridge's classroom policies are a representation of real-life state-sponsored education policies, while the O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s mimic the SAT and ACT tests in the U.S. and the A Levels in the U.K., all of which control

students' access to higher education to varying degrees.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

In addition to the original seven novels in the *Harry Potter* series, J.K. Rowling has written several other works and supplemental stories that fit into the same Wizarding world, including *Quidditch Through the Ages* and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, Harry's Care of Magical Creatures textbook. There are also a number of novels that play with the idea of secret societies like the Order of the Phoenix, from historical or realistic fiction novels like [The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society](#) (by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows) and Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, to the speculative fiction novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. Additionally, Rowling's work is often compared with that of J.R.R. Tolkien ([The Hobbit](#); *The Lord of the Rings*) and C.S. Lewis (*The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* and the *Chronicles of Narnia* series). Rowling has cited the work of Jane Austen (and the novel [Emma](#) in particular) as a major influence in her own writing, as well as the work of author and activist Jessica Mitford (*Hons and Rebels*).

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix
- **When Written:** 2000-2003
- **Where Written:** Edinburgh, Scotland
- **When Published:** 2003
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Young Adult Fiction; Fantasy
- **Setting:** Hogwarts; the Ministry of Magic; Number 12, Grimmauld Place
- **Climax:** Voldemort tries to possess Harry during the battle at the Ministry
- **Antagonist:** Voldemort; Dolores Umbridge and the Ministry
- **Point of View:** Third-person limited

EXTRA CREDIT

Fanfiction and More. Thanks to the three-year gap between *Goblet of Fire* and *Order of the Phoenix*, as well as the rise of the internet, Harry Potter fanfiction (fan-created stories using Harry Potter characters that imagines different relationships or storylines) took off in the early 2000s. Harry Potter fanfiction now makes up the majority of fanfiction on most fanfiction websites, and Rowling has been encouraging of those who write it. In addition to these stories, fans have also developed entire religions based on Harry Potter

characters—for example, the Snapists believe they're married to Severus Snape on the astral plane and serve him like a god.

Friends Behind the Scenes. Though Imelda Staunton (Umbridge) and Emma Thompson (Trelawney) play enemies in the film version of *Order of the Phoenix*, the two are actually close friends and neighbors. Staunton has said in interviews that firing Thompson onscreen was something that she'd wanted to do for a long time.



PLOT SUMMARY

At the beginning of August, after a month of no meaningful contact from anyone in the Wizarding world, two dementors attack Harry and his cousin Dudley in an alley. Harry discovers that his neighbor, Mrs. Figg, is a Squib (someone born to a magical family but who can't use magic), and that Dumbledore has been having people watch him. Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia try to kick Harry out as Harry receives a letter calling him to a hearing. When Petunia receives a Howler (an angry, literally explosive letter) with a cryptic message, she insists that Harry has to stay. Three days later, a dozen witches and wizards, including Mad-Eye Moody and Remus Lupin, come to rescue him. Together, they fly to number twelve, Grimmauld Place in London. There Harry reunites with Hermione and Ron and immediately shouts at them about feeling neglected. Hermione and Ron insist that Dumbledore swore them to secrecy and they don't know much. Later, Sirius and Mr. Weasley sit Harry down to fill him in. They tell him that they're trying to spread the news that Voldemort is back and say that Voldemort is after some sort of weapon.

Harry spends the next week helping to clean the house, which belonged to Sirius's parents. The Blacks thought Voldemort was right in his ideas, and their ancient house-elf, Kreacher, mutters rude slurs to himself. On the morning of Harry's hearing, he goes to the Ministry with Mr. Weasley and learns that the place and time of his hearing changed, and he's already late. Though Dumbledore steps in and saves Harry from expulsion or worse, Harry can tell that his trial in front of the full Wizengamot (the high court) was designed to put him at a disadvantage.

The rest of Harry's summer is boring, as Harry spends most of his time cleaning. Ron and Hermione are made prefects, and Harry does his best to celebrate Ron's accomplishment. Back at Hogwarts, things are very different. Harry is shocked to see that the horseless carriages are now pulled by strange reptilian horses, though a girl named Luna tells Harry that the creatures have always been there. Hagrid is gone, the Sorting Hat gives a warning in its song, and the new Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, Dolores Umbridge, makes a speech at the feast implying that Fudge, the Minister of Magic, is interfering at Hogwarts.

Harry's first day is a disaster. Umbridge tells her class that there's no need to perform defensive magic—only to read the “theory” about it—and she gives Harry a week of detention when he insists that Voldemort is back. In this detention, Harry spends every night that week writing “I must not tell lies” with a quill that cuts into his hand and writes with his blood. On Friday night, when Umbridge takes Harry's hand to inspect his wound, Harry's scar burns and he feels a strange sensation in his stomach. The next morning, Harry writes to Sirius and has a conversation with Cho Chang in the school's Owlery.

Ron makes the Gryffindor Quidditch team as their new Keeper. He's a poor player and to make things even worse for him, he receives a letter from Percy telling him to stop spending time with Harry. Percy disowned his family over the summer and wants Ron to pledge his loyalty to the Ministry. One night, an image of Sirius's head appears in the common room fireplace. He tells the trio—Harry, Hermione, and the Ron—that Fudge is afraid that Dumbledore will create an army of students to take over the Ministry, hence Umbridge's refusal to teach practical magic.

Harry's second week is almost as bad as his first: Umbridge becomes the Hogwarts High Inquisitor, which gives her hiring and firing power, and he spends another week in detention with her. At the end of the week, Hermione suggests that Harry teach the other students Defense Against the Dark Arts, but Harry gets angry with her. Two weeks later, Harry agrees to talk to interested students in Hogsmeade. Twenty-five people show up. On Monday—seemingly in response to this—Umbridge creates a rule that disbands all clubs and groups. The Defense group decides to meet anyway. It takes McGonagall's help for the Gryffindor Quidditch team to get permission to re-form, after also having been disbanded by Umbridge. That weekend, Sirius speaks to the trio through the fireplace again to voice his support for their secret group. He cuts their conversation short when they see Umbridge's hand grabbing about in the fireplace.

The Gryffindor Quidditch team continues to play dismally. One night after practice, Harry's scar burns again and he feels inexplicably angry. He tells Ron that Voldemort is angry, but he's not sure how he knows. That night, Dobby greets Harry in the common room and suggests that Harry's group could practice in the Room of Requirement, which changes to become whatever a person needs. Harry begins later that week teaching basic spells to his classmates. They decide to call themselves Dumbledore's Army, or the D.A.

The next weekend is the first Quidditch match. Gryffindor wins, but Harry and George beat up Malfoy when he insults their parents—and as punishment, Umbridge bans Harry, George, and Fred from playing again. Harry, Ron, and Hermione realize later that night that Hagrid is home and visit him. He's bruised and bleeding, but tells them about trying and failing to meet with the giants. Umbridge interrupts and is very curious as to

where Hagrid was, but he won't say. Hagrid's first Care of Magical Creatures lesson concerns "thestrals," which Harry learns are the reptilian horses that pull the carriages. Only people who have seen death can see them. Umbridge inspects Hagrid's lesson and acts as though Hagrid doesn't speak intelligible English.

Harry continues to teach at D.A. meetings until right before Christmas. At the last meeting, Cho kisses Harry, though she cries about Cedric Diggory too. That night, Harry dreams that he's a snake and he attacks Mr. Weasley. Harry wakes up screaming and in pain. McGonagall takes him and Ron to Dumbledore's office, where Dumbledore takes Harry seriously but still refuses to look at him. Harry catches his eye at one point and feels an urge to attack him. Dumbledore then sends Harry and all the Weasleys to Grimmauld Place.

Sirius, Harry, and the Weasleys sit up until Mrs. Weasley arrives with news that Mr. Weasley—who was indeed attacked by a giant snake—will live. Harry tells Sirius privately about feeling like he was the snake, but Sirius sends Harry to bed. Harry only pretends to nap and then joins the others to visit Mr. Weasley. When the adults are in the room alone, Fred and George pull out Extendable Ears to eavesdrop. Harry hears that Voldemort might be possessing him, and he feels dirty and contaminated until Ginny points out that she's been possessed, and Harry's experiences don't match hers. At the end of the holidays, Snape visits and tells Harry that he's to teach Harry Occlumency (the art of closing one's mind to the invasion of another) on Dumbledore's orders.

During Harry's first Occlumency lesson, he discovers that Dumbledore wants Harry's recurring dreams of a corridor to stop, as well as stopping Harry's flashes of Voldemort's emotions. The lesson is awful, as Snape tries to break into Harry's mind. Harry learns that the corridor he keeps dreaming about is in the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry of Magic.

On Valentine's Day, Hermione receives a letter and asks Harry to meet her in Hogsmeade. Harry is supposed to be with Cho, but he agrees. His date goes poorly, especially when he mentions that he needs to meet Hermione. When he meets Hermione, he finds her with Luna and Rita Skeeter. Hermione asks Rita to interview Harry and write an article telling his truth, which Luna's father, the editor of the magazine *The Quibbler*, has agreed to publish. When the magazine comes out a few weeks later, Umbridge is furious and bans the magazine. Harry dreams that night that he's Voldemort, talking to someone about removing the "weapon" from the Department of Mysteries.

Umbridge fires Trelawney, but Dumbledore replaces her with Firenze, a centaur. At the next D.A. meeting, Dobby alerts the group that Umbridge has found them out. Umbridge drags Harry to Dumbledore's office and Dumbledore insists that the

group was his idea. He escapes Fudge and several Aurors—disappearing dramatically—and Umbridge then becomes the headmistress in his place.

After this, Fred and George begin creating mayhem in the school. One evening, Malfoy calls Snape away from Harry's Occlumency lesson. Harry decides to dive into Snape's memories that he stored in a Pensieve and finds a memory of James Potter taunting young Snape. Adult Snape catches Harry doing this, and ends their lessons in a fit of rage. A week later, Fred and George install a portable swamp to distract Umbridge so Harry can use her office fireplace to speak to Sirius and Lupin about what he saw. They assure Harry that James matured and bettered himself, changing from the teenaged jerk that Harry saw in the Pensieve. Fred and George leave school dramatically when Umbridge catches them.

During the season's last Quidditch match, Hagrid pulls Hermione and Harry away and leads them into the forest. There he introduces them to Grawp, his giant half-brother. Harry also learns that the centaurs are angry that Firenze is working for Dumbledore, so the forest isn't safe anymore.

The fifth-year students begin to take their [O.W.L.s](#) the next week. While taking their practical Astronomy exam, the students watch Umbridge and a few Aurors attempt to arrest Hagrid. The Aurors hurt McGonagall, while Hagrid runs away. Harry falls asleep the next afternoon in his History of Magic exam and dreams that Voldemort has Sirius in the Department of Mysteries. He insists that they need to go rescue Sirius immediately. Hermione, Ron, Luna, and Ginny help create a diversion so that Harry can check to see if Sirius is home, but Kreacher tells Harry that Sirius is in the Department of Mysteries. Umbridge catches Harry using her office fireplace, but Hermione tricks her into following them into the woods to see a nonexistent "weapon." The angry centaurs carry Umbridge off and try to hurt Harry and Hermione, but Grawp scatters the centaurs. Luna, Ginny, and Neville meet Harry and Hermione in the woods and Luna suggests that they ride thestrals to the Ministry of Magic.

The Department of Mysteries is more confusing in person than it is in Harry's dream, but he finally leads his friends to where he saw Sirius. Sirius isn't there, but Harry finds a small glass globe with his name on it. When he picks it up, Lucius Malfoy and other Death Eaters appear and ask for the prophecy. In the following fight, Harry and his friends manage to evade the Death Eaters. The Order of the Phoenix, including Sirius, arrives to save the day, but Neville drops the prophecy and breaks it. Just as Dumbledore arrives, Bellatrix Lestrange curses Sirius and he falls through a mysterious archway and dies. Harry chases Bellatrix to the atrium and hides behind the [Fountain of Magical Brethren](#). Voldemort arrives and he and Dumbledore duel. Voldemort attempts to possess Harry, but Harry survives. Fudge arrives and finally sees Voldemort in the flesh, just before Voldemort and the Death Eaters escape.

Dumbledore sends Harry back to Hogwarts and when he returns himself, forces Harry to listen to him. He insists that Sirius's death is his fault because he kept information from Harry; as a result of Harry's ignorance, Voldemort tricked him by planting the dream of torturing Sirius. This is why Dumbledore wanted Harry to learn Occlumency—to keep Voldemort from using their strange mental connection to his advantage. Dumbledore also tells Harry something that he insists he should've told him long ago: Voldemort tried to kill Harry as a baby because of a prophecy, and the prophecy also stated that either Voldemort or Harry will have to kill the other. "Neither can live while the other survives," the prophecy declares.

Harry spends the last week of term grieving and thinking over the implications of all that he has learned. When he arrives in King's Cross, several members of the Order of the Phoenix tell his Uncle Vernon that if he continues to mistreat Harry, there will be consequences.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Harry Potter – The titular protagonist; a fifteen-year-old wizard. As a baby, the Dark Lord Voldemort tried to kill Harry. He succeeded in murdering Harry's parents, James and Lily, but when he tried to kill Harry, the curse rebounded on Voldemort and gave Harry a lightning bolt shaped scar. Throughout the novel (but especially during the summer before his fifth year begins) Harry resents the adults around him for keeping him in the dark in regard to what's going on with the resistance to Voldemort. This resentment grows as adults continue to ignore Harry, and this makes Harry feel alone, unmoored, and though he has to rely on himself to figure things out, rather than understanding that he can ask for help. Harry does his best to be a good friend, and as in the previous books, he is extremely close with Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. After witnessing his fifteen-year-old father torment Snape in one of Snape's memories, Harry begins to question how much he should admire his father and how good of a person his father really was. With this, Harry also begins to question who he is and ultimately comes to the conclusion that he can love and respect his father while not embodying him in every way. Umbridge's appointment to Hogwarts poses several problems for Harry. She makes it clear that she's there to stop Harry from telling the truth about Voldemort, which makes Harry even angrier than he already is and also reinforces for him the importance of telling his story, even when there are dire consequences to doing so. Harry's stubbornness means that he's often at odds with Umbridge and makes little effort to behave. Later, Dumbledore explains that he ignored Harry in an attempt to keep him safe and tells him that according to a prophecy, Harry must kill Voldemort or Voldemort will kill him.

With this, Harry is able to understand what his future will hold and in doing so, can come of age and look at events with a more level head.

Dolores Umbridge – One of the novel's antagonists. A short, squat witch who looks like a toad and often wears pink and fluffy cardigans, Umbridge is in league with Fudge and will do whatever she can to keep Fudge—and by extension, herself—in power. This includes introducing Educational Decrees that disempower other teachers and Dumbledore, as well as considering using Unforgivable Curses against students. Umbridge treats students as though they're small children and demands unwavering respect from them in an infantilizing way. Her high, simpering voice allows her to look as though she's harmless and welcoming, when in actuality, she is, according to McGonagall and other adults, one of the most dangerous individuals in the school. She makes it her mission to discredit Harry's story of Voldemort's return by telling him he's lying and criminalizing the act of believing him. Throughout the school year, she and Harry engage in a battle of wills as he speaks out about Voldemort's return and she punishes him physically (with her quill that writes by cutting into Harry's hand and uses his blood) and by banning him from playing Quidditch. Lupin notes that Umbridge hates and fears "half-breeds" like werewolves and is known for introducing legislation that makes it impossible for werewolves to get jobs. Because of this hatred, Umbridge takes aim against Hagrid, and she and several Aurors try to arrest him. Hermione, however, is able to use Umbridge's hatred to her advantage when Umbridge catches Harry in her office, as Hermione leads Umbridge into the Forbidden Forest in pursuit of Dumbledore's "weapon" and straight into the herd of angry and easily offended centaurs. Though Umbridge isn't in league with Voldemort, she shows Harry that a person doesn't need to be a Death Eater to be evil—one only needs to be obsessed with power and willing to do anything to keep it.

Hermione Granger – One of Harry's two best friends and the smartest witch in his year. Hermione is thrilled to be made a prefect and takes her responsibilities very seriously. She does her best to stop Fred and George from testing their joke products on first years, and when [O.W.L.s](#) roll around, she confiscates all manner of illegal study aids. Hermione believes Harry and Dumbledore that Voldemort is back, but she also continues to get the *Daily Prophet*, which publishes only articles that support the Ministry of Magic's agenda, since she wants to know what the "other side" is saying. A good and careful listener, Hermione is one of the only students to immediately pick up on the fact that Umbridge intends to bring the school under Ministry control. Hermione developed the Society for the Protection of Elfish Welfare in their previous year, and tries to advocate for minorities in the Wizarding world, especially house-elves (she herself is Muggle-born, and so looked down on by some other wizards). Her methods are questionable, however, and often a source of comedy. For example, she

begins leaving elf hats and socks around the Gryffindor common room in an attempt to free the elves, though this results in Dobby—a free elf who loves clothes—being the only elf willing to clean Gryffindor tower. When she meets Grawp and the centaurs, Hermione's language also betrays that she doesn't truly understand her power and privilege as a human, and further doesn't believe that giants can be truly integrated into Wizarding society. Around Valentine's Day, Hermione arranges for Rita Skeeter to interview Harry about Voldemort's return. The resulting article runs in *The Quibbler*, which Hermione thinks only publishes silly articles. She recognizes, however, that if the truth is published, people will read it. She's also the brain behind Dumbledore's Army, as she believes both that preparing to fight Voldemort and preparing to take O.W.L.s is important, and in general she pushes both Harry and Ron to be their best selves. Hermione also trusts Dumbledore, so she consistently tells Harry to inform Dumbledore of when his scar hurts and encourages him to practice Occlumency. She's the only one who suspects that Harry's dream of Voldemort torturing Sirius is a trap—and she's right. She's injured in the Department of Mysteries, but makes a full recovery.

Ron Weasley – One of Harry's two best friends. Ron is a tall, gangly redhead and the sixth Weasley child. Though he's never been a great student and has gotten into nearly as much trouble at school as Harry, Dumbledore makes Ron a prefect. Ron struggles throughout the year with this. In some ways it validates him and makes him feel important, while at times, he resents the responsibility and doesn't want to be the kind of person who's made a prefect. Ron is an extremely loyal friend. He tears up Percy's letter when Percy suggests that Ron stop spending time with Harry, and he also supports Harry's attempts to speak to Sirius through the fireplace and later, to go to the Ministry to rescue Sirius. After receiving a new broomstick, Ron tries out for the position of Keeper on the Gryffindor Quidditch team, and gets it. However, because Ron isn't used to the taunts and the pressure of representing his house in Quidditch, he allows the Slytherins' cruel song "Weasley is our King" to get to him and he plays poorly for most of the year. He only starts playing well in the final game of the season, which neither Harry nor Hermione watch. Though Ron remains close to Harry throughout the school year, he's often on the receiving end of Harry's temper. This has to do with the fact that Ron consistently tells Harry to tell either McGonagall or Dumbledore about Harry's scar pain and his sense of being connected to Voldemort. Ron is disturbed when he learns that Snape is going to teach Harry Occlumency; he doesn't trust Snape and doesn't believe Harry should either. He's thrilled when Harry agrees to form Dumbledore's Army and dedicates himself to learning Defense Against the Dark Arts from a competent teacher. Ron throws himself behind Harry when Harry insists they save Sirius from the Department of Mysteries, though he soon becomes a liability. After a Death Eater hits him with a spell that makes Ron unable to think

clearly, Ron summons brains out of a tank, and the brains' tentacles are very damaging to him. He later makes a full recovery, however.

Professor Albus Dumbledore – The headmaster of Hogwarts. Dumbledore is an old and accomplished wizard who, according to many, is the only wizard Voldemort is afraid of. As Harry's mentor, Harry is very close to Dumbledore, so it's hurtful and confusing to Harry when Dumbledore refuses to speak to him or make eye contact for the entirety of the school year. Dumbledore is the head of the Order of the Phoenix and was able to call a meeting within hours of Voldemort's return a month before the start of the novel, and he's a primary source of information and analysis regarding Voldemort and what the Death Eaters are up to. Because Dumbledore's power and the fact that he insists that Voldemort is back, Cornelius Fudge sees Dumbledore as a threat and seeks to discredit him and everyone who sympathizes with or believes in him. Dumbledore is an extremely powerful wizard who overwhelmingly uses his power for good, including rescuing students like Marietta—whom he has every right to dislike—hiring free elves like Dobby, and hiring Firenze. Dumbledore believes that wizards should treat non-human beings with respect and empathy, and firmly believes in the power of love to overcome evil like Voldemort's. Harry learns at various points that Dumbledore is worried about him and the dreams he has about Voldemort and the Department of Mysteries, but because Dumbledore continues to ignore Harry, Harry refuses to ask him for help. Harry also doesn't take Dumbledore's insistence that Harry learn Occlumency seriously. After Dumbledore duels Voldemort and saves Harry at the Ministry, Dumbledore finally speaks to Harry. He explains why Voldemort tried to kill Harry as a baby, takes responsibility for Sirius's death, and apologizes for keeping Harry in the dark. He suggests that though he tried to protect Harry by keeping information from him—and did this because he loves Harry—in reality, this only made Harry more vulnerable to manipulation and led to most of the suffering Harry experienced.

Sirius Black – Harry's godfather. Fourteen years earlier, Sirius was imprisoned in Azkaban for a crime he didn't commit, but he escaped two years ago with Harry's help and has been on the run since then. He takes up residence at his own childhood home—number twelve, Grimmauld Place—not long before the novel starts and offers it to the Order of the Phoenix to use as its headquarters. Sirius is a lively, involved, and action-oriented person, but because he's still on the run from the Ministry, he must stay cooped up at Grimmauld Place all the time to avoid detection. The one time he leaves the house in his dog form (he's also an unregistered Animagus, who can transform into a large black dog), Lucius Malfoy recognizes him and begins telling people that Sirius is in London. Due to being cooped up, especially in a house that he hates, Sirius becomes sullen and

withdrawn. To make things worse, Sirius inherited the house-elf Kreacher in addition to Grimmauld Place, and Kreacher has spent the last several years taking orders from Mrs. Black's portrait. Sirius treats Kreacher with disdain and though he's never outright cruel to Kreacher, he also doesn't do anything to make Kreacher's life easier. Throughout the novel, Sirius encourages Harry to rebel against Umbridge and rebels himself by speaking to Harry through the Gryffindor common room fireplace. At other times, he doesn't appear to take Harry's concerns seriously, as when he suggests that Harry is just tired after his dream of attacking Mr. Weasley. After Harry sees Snape's memory of being taunted by James, Sirius also tries to explain to Harry that while James was self-important and a jerk at age fifteen, he also wasn't a bad person. When Sirius learns that Harry went to the Ministry believing that Sirius was there, he insists on accompanying the Order and saving Harry. However, while dueling with his cousin Bellatrix Lestrange, Sirius falls backward through a mysterious and ghostly arch and dies.

Lord Voldemort – The main antagonist of the series; a Dark wizard who came to power decades ago, was destroyed when he tried to kill Harry as a baby, and then returned to power four weeks before the novel begins—though most people refuse to believe he's back. He's slippery and snake-like, and owns a giant snake. His followers are known as Death Eaters, and they all bear a tattoo of a skull with a snake tongue that Voldemort uses to call them to him. Voldemort tries to lay low for most of the year, as Harry wasn't supposed to survive the events in the graveyard and ruined Voldemort's plans by telling Dumbledore that Voldemort is alive. Because of this, Voldemort turns his attention to getting information that he believes will help him destroy Harry. This information takes the form of a prophecy, which Voldemort heard half of before Harry's birth and which Voldemort believes will allow him to triumph. In reality, the prophecy simply says that either Voldemort or Harry will have to kill the other, and that by trying to kill Harry years ago, Voldemort "marked him as his equal." Voldemort fears death more than anything and has little respect for the power of love, though he does know how to weaponize love to hurt others. This is why he plants the dream that he's torturing Sirius in Harry's mind. Voldemort is able to do this because when his curse to kill baby Harry backfired, a connection formed between the two. Harry can often feel Voldemort's emotions and when Voldemort becomes aware of this, he plants the dream of the Department of Mysteries (where the prophecy is stored) in Harry's mind. However, because Harry can love and does love, Voldemort is unable to properly possess him when he tries to do so in person. Most wizards fear Voldemort above all else and refuse to say his name, instead calling him "You-Know-Who."

Professor Severus Snape – The Potions Master at Hogwarts and a member of the Order of the Phoenix. Harry has a difficult

time believing that Snape is truly loyal to Dumbledore, given that he was once a Death Eater, continues to follow Voldemort as part of his work for the Order, and hates Harry and everyone Harry loves with a passion. Snape is a nasty teacher; he plays favorites and torments the students he doesn't like, like Harry and Neville. Neville simply performs poorly under the pressure, while Harry fails many of his assignments because Snape purposefully breaks Harry's vials of potion or Vanishes Harry's potion when he makes a mistake. After Harry's dream of attacking Mr. Weasley as Voldemort's snake, Dumbledore insists that Snape teach Harry Occlumency, a branch of magic that protects a person's mind from attack. These lessons, however—in which Snape tries again and again to break into Harry's mind, with success—are perfect vehicles for Snape to continue to torment Harry, insult him, and make Harry trust him even less. One evening, when Snape is called away, Harry chooses to enter into Snape's memories in the Pensieve to see the memories that Snape doesn't want Harry to find. Harry discovers a memory that shows him how his father James and Sirius taunted and tortured Snape for no reason as students at Hogwarts. Following this, Snape refuses to teach Harry Occlumency. Like several of the other professors, Snape understands the necessity of seeming to support Umbridge, at least superficially. This is why, when Harry asks Snape for help in code in front of Umbridge, Snape pretends to not understand. He does, however, alert Dumbledore and the rest of the Order, who are then able to save Harry and his friends from Voldemort at the Ministry.

Luna Lovegood – Luna is a quirky fourth year Ravenclaw student. Classmates call her "Loony" Lovegood and make fun of her, as she has persistently misty eyes, a dreamy voice, and believes fully in creatures that don't exist and a number of conspiracy theories. Her father is the editor of *The Quibbler*, a magazine known for publishing articles of questionable accuracy and subject matter, and she is once found reading an edition upside down. Harry finds her uncomfortable to be around, especially since she's the only other person who can see the thestrals. She assures him they're both sane, which, given Luna's reputation, Harry finds questionable. Hermione finds Luna maddening and insults her often, but around Valentine's Day she asks Luna for help and arranges for Rita Skeeter to interview Harry and write an article to be published in *The Quibbler*. Luna and her father are thrilled, as the article boosts *The Quibbler's* popularity and her father even sells the article to the *Daily Prophet*, which allows them the finances to take a trip to hunt for one of their magical creatures. Though she's a member of Dumbledore's Army, Harry remains unconvinced of Luna's abilities until after she accompanies him to the Ministry to rescue Sirius. In the days after Sirius's death, Harry discovers that Luna can see the thestrals because her own mother died several years ago. She assures Harry that the dead are always around and is the only one who says anything that Harry finds truly comforting. Harry also finds that he feels

bad for Luna for the first time, as students steal her belongings as a joke.

Hagrid – The Hogwarts gamekeeper as well as Harry's friend and confidante. Hagrid is gone for the first few months of the school year and nobody knows where he is. When he returns, bruised, bleeding, and missing teeth, he explains that he and Madame Maxime went to the giants on Dumbledore's orders and attempted to invite them to join Dumbledore in fighting Voldemort. Because Hagrid is half-giant, Umbridge dislikes him immediately. Though Hagrid's questionable teaching methods and his adoration of dangerous creatures make for more than enough fodder for Umbridge to fire him as the Care of Magical Creatures professor, they also get off on the wrong foot because of Umbridge's obvious racism, as she speaks to Hagrid as though he barely speaks English. Throughout the school year, Hagrid continues to acquire injuries and refuses to tell Harry, Ron, and Hermione where he's getting them, only cryptically talking about the importance of family. During the final Quidditch match, he explains what's going on to Harry and Hermione: he brought back his giant half-brother, Grawp, and has been trying to teach the violent young giant English with little success. Hagrid asks the trio to look after Grawp when Umbridge inevitably fires him. Umbridge's attempt to fire Hagrid is horrific, as she goes to his hut at night with Aurors and starts a fight with Hagrid. Hagrid escapes with Fang and doesn't return.

Fred Weasley – One of the Weasley twins. A seventh year, Fred isn't especially interested in returning to Hogwarts to sit his [N.E.W.T.](#) exams. He only does so because Mrs. Weasley insists, and Fred and George don't want to make Mrs. Weasley even angrier after the fiasco of Percy abandoning their family. What both twins really want to do—and what they spend most of the school year doing—is to develop products for their joke shop, Weasley's Wizard Wheezes. Their joke products represent a firm understanding of a variety of magical disciplines and even impress Hermione, though the twins are often at odds with Hermione because she takes offense when they test their products on first years. After beating up Malfoy for insulting Mrs. Weasley, Fred and George are banned from playing Quidditch. Without that to distract them, they take it upon themselves to make Umbridge's life miserable. In addition to joining Dumbledore's Army, Fred and George let fireworks loose, set up a portable swamp in a corridor, and sell "Skiving Snackboxes" that contain sweets to give the consumer enough of an ailment to get sent to the nurse, with an antidote to take once the student has been allowed to leave class. Fred and George dramatically leave Hogwarts after setting up the swamp and announce that they've secured premises in Diagon Alley to sell their wares. There's little difference personality-wise and in terms of goals between Fred and George; they function as a team in all cases and are very close to each other.

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Neville Longbottom – Harry's friend and fellow fifth year student in Gryffindor. Neville has been raised by his gran, as Voldemort's followers tortured his parents to insanity and they now live in St. Mungo's hospital. Though Neville's parents were accomplished wizards and well-known among the resistance to Voldemort, Neville's low self-esteem means that he's a poor wizard. His best subject is Herbology and Professor Sprout encourages him in it. Despite Neville's poor reputation, this year he begins to show that, if given proper instruction and support, he is capable of succeeding. Though he continues to do poorly in most subjects, especially Potions (Professor Snape loves torturing Neville by insulting his intelligence and capabilities), Harry notices that Neville makes great improvements after a few months of Defense Against the Dark Arts lessons with him and Dumbledore's Army. Harry also notes that during their practical [O.W.L.](#) Potions test, where Snape isn't around to make Neville nervous, Neville performs fairly well. Neville accompanies Harry to the Department of Mysteries, where he performs bravely and helps Harry thwart the Death Eaters. Neville does, however, accidentally break the prophecy that he and Harry are trying to protect. Later, Harry learns that the prophecy that led Voldemort to try to kill Harry could have alternatively referred to Neville, if Voldemort had chosen to interpret it in that way. With this, Rowling positions Neville as someone who has been consistently underestimated and overlooked for essentially no good reason. In this way, he's a foil for Harry, who faces great danger but also has support and expectations that Neville has never had.

Professor Minerva McGonagall – The Hogwarts Transfiguration professor and a member of the Order of the Phoenix. She's a proper, imposing, and rule-abiding witch, which puts her in a difficult position when Umbridge begins her crusade to bring Hogwarts under Ministry control. McGonagall clearly recognizes the importance of flying under the radar politically, as she encourages Harry to not anger Umbridge and get on the Ministry's bad side even more than he already is. However, she also praises Harry for standing up to Umbridge by offering him cookies as she reprimands him. Throughout the novel, McGonagall remains loyal to Dumbledore, so she's a prime target for Umbridge. This results in a battle of wills between the two women as Umbridge tries to sabotage Harry and other students by failing them in her class, while McGonagall insists that those students do well under "competent" professors. McGonagall's classes, however, are well planned and seem to adhere to Ministry guidelines, so Umbridge has no grounds to place McGonagall on probation for her teaching. As the Weasley twins create mayhem, McGonagall refuses to help deal with their fireworks or their swamp and even helps Peeves add to the trouble and confusion. She ends up in the hospital when she attempts to stop Umbridge from violently arresting Hagrid, as four Aurors Stun her in the chest.

Kreacher – The house-elf that serves the Black family at number twelve, Grimmauld Place. He's ancient and the towel he wears is so filthy as to be nearly unrecognizable. He seems to entirely subscribe to the Black family's arrogant, prejudiced views, and is sympathetic to Voldemort's cause. Kreacher is thus extremely unhappy serving Sirius; he adored Mrs. Black and the rest of the Black family and detests that the family's home is now the headquarters of the resistance effort against Voldemort. While Harry is there, Kreacher spends much of his time skulking around and trying to steal family heirlooms that Sirius intends to throw away, especially family photographs. Hermione attempts to be kind to Kreacher, but Kreacher regularly insults her by calling her a "Mudblood." Dumbledore and others caution that Kreacher should be treated with kindness, especially because he could be a liability given that he's not at all loyal to Sirius. This proves an appropriate warning, as Dumbledore discovers that starting around Christmas, Kreacher has been visiting Narcissa Malfoy and her family—who are members of the Black family and therefore, technically people that Kreacher can serve—and telling them important information. Kreacher then participates in the plot to lure Harry to the Ministry by injuring the hippogriff Buckbeak so that Sirius is upstairs tending to his wounds when Harry tries to confirm Sirius's whereabouts.

Ginny Weasley – The youngest Weasley child and the only girl; she's a fourth year this year. Over the summer, Ginny joins Fred and George in trying to listen in on Order of the Phoenix meetings and later, she's a proud member of Dumbledore's

Army. On the train to Hogwarts, Ginny demonstrates how kind she is when she encourages everyone to sit with Luna Lovegood, whom Ginny insists is fine, just a bit strange. Ginny takes over at the position of Seeker when Umbridge bans Harry from playing Quidditch and is surprisingly good; Hermione reveals that Ginny has spent her entire childhood stealing her brothers' brooms and practicing in secret. An accomplished witch, Ginny insists on accompanying Harry to the Department of Mysteries and she's an instrumental figure in fighting the Death Eaters and getting Harry's group out alive. For the first time in the series, Ginny is able to interact normally with Harry because, after years of nursing a crush on him, she begins dating a Ravenclaw named Michael Corner. She begins dating Dean Thomas at the end of the school year.

Cornelius Fudge – The pompous and self-important Minister of Magic. Though Harry has most often found Fudge to be bumbling and fatherly throughout the series, Fudge becomes an adversary this year by refusing to believe that Voldemort has returned. He does whatever he can to discredit Harry, including forcing the *Daily Prophet* to only print what he wants them to, and installing Umbridge at Hogwarts as the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher and then as the Hogwarts High Inquisitor. In doing this, Fudge demonstrates that he understands that the best way to keep the population under his thumb is by controlling what young people hear and learn at school. Fudge also attempts to expel Harry from Hogwarts outright after Harry defends himself and Dudley against a dementor, but he's forced to abide by the rule of law, give Harry a hearing, and accept the governing body's decision to clear Harry of all charges. Fudge only believes that Voldemort is back when he sees Voldemort at the Ministry of Magic.

Percy Weasley – The third Weasley child. Though Percy has always been a fan of rules and order, he takes this to the extreme in the weeks before the novel starts. Rather than stand with the rest of his family, believe that Voldemort is back, and join the resistance effort, Percy doubles down on his loyalty to the Ministry and their version of events, which state that Voldemort hasn't returned at all. The Weasleys suspect that Fudge made Percy a secretary so that he could spy on the rest of the family, but when Mr. Weasley suggested this to Percy, Percy angrily packed his things, moved out, and disowned his family. He ignores Harry and his family whenever he sees them and is more than happy to help Umbridge and Fudge in their work, even if it directly and negatively impacts his family. When he learns that Ron has been made a prefect, Percy writes and attempts to convince Ron to follow him in disowning the rest of the family.

Professor Trelawney – The Hogwarts Divination professor. Harry describes her as being like a "glittering insect," as she wears lots of scarves, jewelry, and glasses that magnify her eyes. She attempts to behave mysteriously and act as though she's all-knowing, but she's generally considered a fraud among

the staff and students at Hogwarts. Professor Umbridge capitalizes on this by targeting her and firing her. Harry struggles to empathize with her; Trelawney has a habit of predicting his untimely death and doesn't like Harry much, as he doesn't take Divination seriously. After putting Trelawney on probation, Umbridge fires her and attempts to throw her out of the school. At this point, the rest of the staff rallies around Trelawney and on Dumbledore's orders, help her return to her chambers. Harry learns later that Dumbledore won't let Trelawney leave the school because as incompetent as she seems, Trelawney is actually a real Seer and has made two prophecies in her lifetime. She was the one who, when Dumbledore went to interview her, made the prophecy that Voldemort would choose a boy born in July to kill, "mark him as his equal," and that Voldemort or that boy must kill the other.

Mr. Weasley – Ron's father and an employee in the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts office at the Ministry of Magic. Mr. Weasley loves Muggles and is very interested in Muggle technology, so he enjoys his job. The entire Weasley family is loyal to Dumbledore and to Harry, and when Fudge promotes Percy to a position in his office, Mr. Weasley fears that Fudge is trying to spy on the family and on Dumbledore. An active member of the Order of the Phoenix, Mr. Weasley participates in guard duty for the "weapon" that the Order is trying to protect from Voldemort. One night, Mr. Weasley falls asleep while on duty and Voldemort's snake attacks him. He survives the attack, though afterward he and a young Healer do an experiment with stitches—a practice that doesn't exist in the Wizarding world—with poor results. He does ultimately recover, however.

Mrs. Weasley – Ron's mother and an important member of the Order of the Phoenix. She is a kind, warm woman who treats Harry as an honorary son—but because of this, she tries to keep Harry in the dark about what the Order is up to. She and Sirius are often at odds with each other, as Sirius believes Harry should have more information and Mrs. Weasley thinks that Sirius treats Harry like he's James Potter, Sirius's best friend, not an underage godson in need of guidance and protection. During the time that Harry spends at number twelve, Grimmauld Place, Mrs. Weasley spends most of her time cleaning and cooking. When she tries to tackle a boggart hiding in a writing desk, her boggart horrifically takes the shape of all the members of her family, dead and mangled, showing that her greatest fear is losing her family in the war against Voldemort.

Lily Potter – Harry's mother. She and her husband, James, died when Harry was only a year old, trying to protect him from Voldemort. Lily was beautiful, with red hair and green eyes that she passed onto Harry. When Harry enters Snape's memory and gets a glimpse of his parents and Snape at age fifteen, he's shocked to see that Lily seemed to hate James for tormenting Snape. Lupin and Sirius explain to Harry that Lily began to come around to him about two years later, though she was unaware that James continued to torment Snape. Following the battle at

the Ministry, Dumbledore explains that Harry has to remain with the Dursleys—and specifically, with Petunia, Lily's sister—because Lily's sacrifice tapped into old magic that will continue to protect Harry until he becomes a legal adult. Lily's sacrifice is also why Voldemort couldn't kill Harry as a baby.

James Potter – Harry's father. James and his wife, Lily, died when Harry was one year old, trying to protect Harry from Voldemort. Harry admires his father and takes pride any time someone says that Harry looks like James, but this begins to change when Harry decides to enter Snape's memory in the Pensieve. There, Harry sees fifteen-year-old James torture Snape for no reason, show off for girls, and sees that Lily appeared to hate James. Sirius and Lupin explain to Harry that James was good at everything and embarrassingly full of himself, but he became less arrogant in his late teens. James and Lily were active members of the Order of the Phoenix.

Draco Malfoy – Harry's nemesis at school. Malfoy is a wealthy boy in Slytherin, from a prominent Wizarding family. Though he's always been power-hungry and cruel, this year he has the added benefit of being a prefect, which gives him the power to take House points from people he doesn't like. Though Malfoy certainly knows that Voldemort is back—his father, Lucius Malfoy, is a prominent Death Eater—he plays into Professor Umbridge's insistence that Voldemort isn't back and does everything he can to curry favor with her. When Umbridge forms an "Inquisitorial Squad" made up of students, Malfoy happily joins and abuses his power as a prefect even more. He's enraged with Harry at the end of the school year, as Harry's exploits at the Ministry land Malfoy's father in Azkaban.

Lucius Malfoy – Draco Malfoy's father and a prominent Death Eater. A rich man, Mr. Malfoy is well connected at the Ministry because he often gives money to charitable causes. Nobody outside of the Order of the Phoenix suspects him of being a Death Eater, however. Harry believes correctly that Mr. Malfoy is trying to figure out how to get into the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry, and it's implied that he's the one who placed Imperius charms (mind control) on Broderick Bode and Sturgis Podmore. He takes the lead in trying to negotiate with Harry when Harry and his friends go to the Department of Mysteries themselves, and Mr. Malfoy and his cronies are sentenced to time in Azkaban prison when Dumbledore catches them.

Remus Lupin – One of James Potter's childhood friends and formerly a Defense Against the Dark Arts professor at Hogwarts. He's an active member of the Order of the Phoenix and is one of Harry's beloved mentors. Lupin is also a werewolf, which means that he struggles to find and keep work, both because of social prejudice against werewolves and legislation that feeds on that prejudice and makes it hard for werewolves to find jobs. Though Lupin is only in his thirties, he looks quite old and thin. When Harry discovers that his own father was a bully, Lupin does his best to comfort Harry by accepting

responsibility for not putting a stop to James's bullying and by assuring Harry that James was a fundamentally good person regardless.

Firenze – A centaur whom Dumbledore hires to teach Divination after Umbridge fires Professor Trelawney. For a centaur, Firenze has an unusually close relationship with humans; he allowed Harry to ride him to safety in Harry's first year, and the other centaurs characterize Firenze's employment at Hogwarts as a horrendous betrayal. Firenze wastes no time in telling his class that the kind of Divination and fortune-telling that Trelawney taught is nonsense, and he also gives his students an impromptu lesson in respect and the proper treatment of non-human beings when Dean Thomas asks if Hagrid breeds centaurs. Firenze explains that the centaurs are a people like any other, with their own culture and customs.

Dudley – Harry's Muggle cousin. Dudley has been overweight his entire life, but in the year before the start of the novel, Dudley took up boxing and is now a boxing champion. Harry isn't sure this is a good thing, as learning to punch accurately just makes Dudley a more successful and dangerous bully. He spends his summer running around Little Whinging with his friends, vandalizing the park and beating up kids. Dudley is afraid of Harry's magic and so leaves Harry alone for the most part. One day a dementor attacks Harry and Dudley, and because Dudley can't see dementors, doesn't trust Harry, and doesn't understand how to fight dementors, he tells Vernon and Petunia that Harry was the one who hurt him.

The Sorting Hat – The sentient hat that's responsible for sorting students into different Houses. While it always sings a song before the Sorting Ceremony, this year the hat takes a newly political tone. It suggests that sorting students is actually a bad idea, as it keeps students from connecting with each other. It also implies that between the four Hogwarts founders, Helga Hufflepuff was the only one who had the right idea when it came to education: rather than choosing students for a particular quality, like bravery or intelligence, she declared that she'd take everyone and treat them equally.

Professor Lockhart – The Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher during Harry's second year at Hogwarts. He was a famous author who, Harry and Ron discovered, hadn't actually done any of the heroic things he wrote about in his books—he found the people who did them, wiped their memories, and took credit for their actions. When he attempted to do the same to Ron and Harry, Ron's broken wand malfunctioned and the memory charm rebounded on Lockhart. He lives in a permanent ward at St. Mungo's hospital, and though he doesn't remember anything, he still loves signing photos of himself and reading his fan mail.

Cedric Diggory – A fifth year student who, a month before the start of the novel, was murdered by Voldemort. Harry has nightmares often about Cedric's murder. In the aftermath of his

death, when the government takes the official stance that Voldemort isn't back, people like Fudge and Umbridge politicize Cedric's death and insist that he died because of an accident. He and Cho dated, which makes Harry and Cho's budding romance awkward—Cho often cries about Cedric. Harry tells her at one point that Cedric was a very accomplished wizard and knew lots of defensive spells, but it didn't matter against Voldemort.

Nymphadora Tonks – A young Auror and member of the Order of the Phoenix who goes by her surname. She's a Metamorphmagus, which means that she can change her appearance at will. Though this helped her when she took the tests to qualify as an Auror, she's extremely clumsy and so barely passed the tests in stealth and tracking. She constantly knocks things over at number twelve, Grimmauld Place, and often wakes up Mrs. Black's portrait. She's a distant cousin of Sirius's, but Mrs. Black burned Tonks's mother off of the family tree because she married a Muggle. Despite her clumsiness, Tonks is a skilled fighter.

Mad-Eye Moody – A former Auror and present member of the Order of the Phoenix. Moody's work as an Auror left him scarred, short one leg and one eye, and extremely suspicious of everyone. He's known as "Mad-Eye" because after the loss of his eye, he began to wear a large blue eye that can spin a full 360 degrees and see through solid objects. Though Moody technically taught Defense Against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts last year, Harry meets Moody for the first time this year—last year, one of Voldemort's Death Eaters impersonated Moody for the entire year and kept the real Moody locked in a trunk.

Rita Skeeter – A former journalist for the *Daily Prophet*. She made her name painting Harry as an unhinged madman, but stopped her crusade when Hermione figured out that Skeeter is an unregistered Animagus and threatened to expose her to the Ministry. Hermione calls her in to conduct an interview with Harry, to be published in *The Quibbler*, that gives Harry the platform to tell his story. Though Skeeter is upset to be forced into telling the truth by someone like Hermione, she follows through anyway and acts as though the thrill of writing and interviewing Harry is too much to turn down.

Dobby – A house-elf who, three years ago, Harry freed from service to the Malfoy family. Dobby now works in the Hogwarts kitchens as a happily free elf and idolizes Harry. He loves clothes and is the only elf willing to clean the Gryffindor common room, given that Hermione leaves hats around in the hopes of freeing elves. Dobby tells Harry about the Room of Requirement and for Christmas, decorates the room with decorations bearing Harry's face. He later disobeys Umbridge to warn Harry and the D.A. that they've been found out.

Uncle Vernon – Harry's uncle. He's a huge man with a massive moustache. Vernon detests Harry and thinks he's always up to no good, so he doesn't take Harry seriously when Harry wants

to watch the news over the summer. Vernon cares about normalcy most of all, which is why he hates Harry and all people who are different. Vernon loses his temper and tries to kick Harry out after a dementor attacks Harry and Dudley, but he agrees to back up Petunia when she insists that Harry has to stay.

Aunt Petunia – Harry's aunt. She's a thin and horse-faced woman who loves nothing more than spying on the neighbors. Though Petunia hates Harry, she knows that she has to continue to allow him to stay at her home. Dumbledore later explains to Harry that this is because Lily's sacrifice to save Harry will only continue to protect him if he remains with Petunia, Lily's sister. Harry is grateful that Petunia is his aunt for the first time when Petunia reveals that she knows what dementors are and grasps the implications of Voldemort's return.

Cho Chang – The Seeker on the Ravenclaw Quidditch team. She's a year older than Harry and was Cedric Diggory's girlfriend, though she nurses complicated feelings for Harry throughout the book. While Harry finds Cho beautiful and wants to spend time with her, he also finds Cho confusing: she talks about Cedric when she and Harry are together, and cries often. Though they kiss and go out together on Valentine's Day, any chance of a real relationship dissolves when Cho's friend Marietta tells Umbridge about Dumbledore's Army.

Mrs. Figg – Harry always thought that Mrs. Figg was just a batty, cat-loving neighbor on Privet Drive, but this year he learns that Mrs. Figg is actually a Squib (a non-magical person born to magical parents). She's the only person around connected to the Wizarding world when dementors attack Harry and Dudley, and her anger shows that she cares deeply for Harry's safety. She later testifies at Harry's hearing, and though Harry isn't sure how much good her testimony does—she only poorly describes what dementors look like—Harry gets off.

Mrs. Black – Sirius's mother. Though she's been dead for twelve years at the start of the novel, she appears in her portrait in number twelve, Grimmauld Place. Her portrait isn't entirely sentient, but it screams obscenities about Mudbloods and half-breeds whenever someone rings the doorbell or makes too much noise. In life, she was obsessed with blood purity, and on the Black family tree, she burned off the names of family members who offended her by not buying into the same ideology.

Mundungus Fletcher – A dirty and smelly criminal known for stealing and smuggling valuable objects. Though Mrs. Weasley doesn't like him and he's not a particularly pleasant person to be around, he's an asset to the Order of the Phoenix because he knows all the other criminals and can give the Order important information. When Mundungus leaves his guard duty watching Harry on Privet Drive to attend to one of his shady business dealings, dementors attack Harry.

Grawp – Hagrid's 16-foot giant half-brother. Hagrid found him while on his mission to make contact with the giants over the summer and brought him back to Hogwarts to live in the Forbidden Forest, as Grawp is small for a giant and was therefore at risk of violence from the other giants. Though Hagrid tries to teach Grawp English, Grawp seems uninterested and wants to go home. He is, however, upset when Umbridge fires Hagrid and seems to have a connection with Hermione.

Bellatrix Lestrange – One of Sirius's cousins and a prominent Death Eater. She escapes from Azkaban after Christmas with other Death Eaters and returns to serve Voldemort. When Harry meets her in the Department of Mysteries, he thinks that she was once beautiful, but Azkaban robbed her of her looks. She is exceptionally cruel and devoted to Voldemort, and kills Sirius by cursing him and throwing him backwards through the arch. For this, Harry attempts to perform the Cruciatus Curse on her.

Peeves – The Hogwarts poltergeist. Though his usual habit is to make life horrible for students and he only barely accepts the authority of Hogwarts teachers, he uncharacteristically takes an order from Fred and George when, upon their departure from the school, they ask him to give Umbridge hell for them. Peeves takes this order seriously, causing mayhem that is directly intended to make Umbridge's life miserable.

Marietta – A friend of Cho Chang's who unwillingly joins Dumbledore's Army. Harry is suspicious of her from the beginning, and these suspicions later prove correct: Marietta outs Harry and the other students to Umbridge. This results in Marietta suffering from Hermione's cursed membership list, which makes acne-like boils spelling "SNEAK" appear on Marietta's face. She wears a balaclava on the Hogwarts Express home, suggesting that nobody is able to remedy the curse.

Broderick Bode – A Ministry employee who worked in the Department of Mysteries. He ends up in St. Mungo's hospital and is there in a long-term ward when Mr. Weasley is hospitalized over Christmas. He cannot speak about why he's there but shows signs of recovery. Before he recovers, however, he dies—and Hermione believes he was murdered. Someone anonymously sent him a cutting of the dangerous plant Devil's Snare, and it strangled him. Harry later works out that Bode attempted to remove a prophecy, which a person cannot do unless they're named in the prophecy, and this is why Bode ended up in St. Mungo's.

Sturgis Podmore – A member of the Order of the Phoenix who makes off with Mad-Eye Moody's good Invisibility Cloak. After several months of being mysteriously absent from duty, Podmore is put in Azkaban for trying to break into the Ministry. Harry later deduces that Lucius Malfoy put Podmore under the Imperius Curse and tried to get him to steal the prophecy from the Department of Mysteries.

Professor Flitwick – The Charms professor at Hogwarts.

Flitwick is a small and cheerful man, though he works Harry's class very hard in preparation for their [O.W.L.](#) exams. Because he's loyal to Dumbledore, he feigns incompetence and refuses to get rid of George and Fred's portable swamp until Umbridge leaves the school. He also refuses to do anything about the twins' fireworks.

Phineas Nigellus – One of the former Hogwarts Headmasters and a relative of Sirius. Though dead in real life, his portrait hangs in Dumbledore's office and he's able to travel between his portraits that hang in various places, including number twelve, Grimmauld Place and the Ministry of Magic. He's a self-important person and despises teenagers.

Seamus Finnigan – One of Harry's roommates and a fellow fifth year Gryffindor student. Seamus and Harry begin the year on the wrong foot, as Seamus's mother tried to forbid him from returning to Hogwarts—she believes Harry is lying. Harry and Seamus refuse to speak to each other for much of the novel, but after Harry's interview in *The Quibbler*, Seamus affirms his loyalty to Harry and joins Dumbledore's Army.

Ernie MacMillan – A pompous and self-important, yet kind, Hufflepuff student in the fifth year. He's also a prefect. He's upfront about his family believing Harry's testimony that Voldemort is back and is eager to join Dumbledore's Army. As [O.W.L.](#) time approaches, Ernie becomes a trying individual to be around, as he interrogates people about how many hours they're studying every night.

Professor Grubbly-Plank – The substitute Care of Magical Creatures teacher. She's a no-nonsense woman who refuses to say anything about where Hagrid is, though it's unclear if she's lying or honestly doesn't know. She's an extremely competent teacher, however, and despite Harry's loyalty to Hagrid, he takes Hedwig to Grubbly-Plank after something attacks Hedwig.

Nearly Headless Nick – The Gryffindor ghost, named because his beheading wasn't entirely successful, and his head is still attached to his body by a small bit of flesh. Harry seeks Nick out after Sirius dies to ask him if it's possible for Sirius to come back as a ghost. Nick sadly explains that becoming a ghost is only something that people who fear death to an extreme degree choose, and most people pass on.

Kingsley Shacklebolt – A tall Auror with a calming demeanor. He's also a member of the Order of the Phoenix. At the Ministry he's in charge of the hunt for Sirius, so he feeds the Ministry false information that Sirius is in Tibet. He pretends to despise Mr. Weasley and other Order members while at work.

Lee Jordan – A friend of Fred and George's. He stays at school after they leave and takes over tormenting Umbridge for them. He makes a habit of levitating nifflers into Umbridge's office through the window, which Umbridge blames on Hagrid and uses as evidence to fire him. Lee is also a member of

Dumbledore's Army.

Filch – The caretaker of Hogwarts. He's old, detests students, and longs for the days when he used to be able to whip students or chain them in the dungeons. He adores Umbridge because she promises to bring back this kind of punishment and also promises to get Peeves, his nemesis, thrown out of the castle.

Bill Weasley – The eldest Weasley sibling, who is a former treasure hunter at Gringotts Bank and a member of the Order of the Phoenix. Because of his line of work, he's in contact with goblins and tries to talk to them about working with Dumbledore. According to Fred and George, he's been spending a lot of time with Fleur Delacour.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Pansy Parkinson – A mean and rude Slytherin student whom Dumbledore makes a prefect. She watches the Gryffindor Quidditch tryouts for Keeper and there, reveals that in addition to the classic Slytherin belief in "blood purity," she's also racist—she insults Angelia Johnson for her traditionally black hairstyle.

Neville's Gran – The imposing woman who raises Neville. Harry, Ron, and Hermione meet her over Christmas, while Neville and his gran are at St. Mungo's hospital visiting Neville's parents. Neville's gran is clearly very proud of her son and daughter-in-law, and encourages Neville to take pride in his parents' sacrifice.

Charlie Weasley – The second-oldest of the Weasley children. He works with dragons in Romania and remains there throughout the novel so that he can work on cultivating international support for the resistance effort against Voldemort.

Amelia Bones – The imposing witch who, along with Cornelius Fudge, presides over Harry's disciplinary hearing. She's impressed that Harry can conjure a "corporeal" Patronus.

Frank Longbottom – Neville's father. Bellatrix Lestrange and other Death Eaters tortured him and his wife to the point of insanity, so they now live at St. Mungo's hospital. He was a prominent member of the original Order of the Phoenix.

Alice Longbottom – Neville's mother. Bellatrix Lestrange and others tortured her and her husband to the point of insanity, so she now lives at St. Mungo's hospital. Though she's not very old, she has graying hair.

Fleur Delacour – A French witch who, last year, represented Beauxbatons Academy in the Triwizard Tournament. She now has a job in London and according to Fred and George, has been spending a lot of time with Bill so she can "practice her English."

Lavender Brown – One of Harry's fellow fifth year Gryffindor students. She loves Divination and admires Professor

Trelawney, so she's distraught when Umbridge fires Trelawney. Her best friend is Parvati Patil.

Parvati Patil – One of Harry's fellow fifth year Gryffindor students. She loves Divination and admires Professor Trelawney, so she's distraught when Umbridge fires Trelawney. Her best friend is Lavender Brown.

Dean Thomas – One of Harry's roommates and a fellow fifth-year Gryffindor student. He joins Dumbledore's Army and, on the Hogwarts Express home, Ginny admits that Dean is her boyfriend.

Bane – A centaur who lives in the Forbidden Forest. He's especially vocal about Firenze's "betrayal" and suggests that the centaurs should punish Harry and Hermione for entering the forest.

Willy Widdershins – The wizard behind the regurgitating toilets that Mr. Weasley is asked to attend to. He gets out of punishment for that charge and later becomes an informant for Dolores Umbridge.

Winky – A freed house-elf who hasn't adjusted well to her freedom. Dobby tells Harry that Winky is beginning to improve from where Harry saw her last in the previous novel, and Winky's alcoholism is getting marginally better.

Karkus – The first Gurg (chief) of the giants when Hagrid and Madame Maxime invite the giants to join Dumbledore. He's interested and sympathetic, but another giant, Golgomath, kills him and takes over as Gurg before Karkus can commit to the cause.

Golgomath – The second Gurg (chief) of the giants when Hagrid and Madame Maxime are attempting to invite the giants to join Dumbledore. Golgomath is interested in speaking with Death Eaters and tries to kill Maxime and Hagrid.

Madame Maxime – A half-giant woman and the headmistress at Beauxbatons Academy. She and Hagrid take the summer to complete a mission on Dumbledore's behalf to make contact with the giants and invite them to work with Dumbledore.

Montague – A Slytherin Quidditch player. Fred and George shove him into a vanishing cabinet and he goes missing for several weeks. He reappears in a toilet, though he's not coherent enough to tell anyone where he was.

Angelina Johnson – A tall black girl who's the new captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch Team. She takes her appointment very seriously and later joins Dumbledore's Army.

Narcissa Malfoy – Draco Malfoy's mother. She's Sirius's cousin and Bellatrix Lestrange's sister, and because of her favorable marriage to Lucius Malfoy, Mrs. Black left Narcissa on the Black family tree.

Wormtail – Voldemort's servant and formerly, one of James, Sirius, and Lupin's best friends.

The Fat Lady – A large woman in a pink dress whose portrait

guards the Gryffindor portrait hole.

Professor Binns – The ghost professor of History of Magic. Nobody but Hermione can stay awake through his lectures, and he can make any subject boring.

Michael Corner – A boy in Ravenclaw that Ginny dates for much of the school year. He later joins Dumbledore's Army and is dating Cho at the end of the novel.

Susan Bones – A fifth year Hufflepuff student who joins Dumbledore's Army. Her aunt is Amelia Bones, the witch who oversees Harry's trial.

Buckbeak – The hippogriff that Sirius escaped with two years ago. He lives in Mrs. Black's room at number twelve, Grimmauld Place.

Professor Quirrell – The Defense Against the Dark Arts professor during Harry's first year at Hogwarts. Voldemort was possessing him.

Viktor Krum – A competitor in the Triwizard Tournament the year before. He remains in contact with Hermione, whom he dated briefly.

Katie Bell – A Chaser on the Gryffindor Quidditch team and a member of Dumbledore's army.

Alicia Spinnett – A Chaser on the Gryffindor Quidditch team and a member of Dumbledore's army.

Zacharias Smith – A Hufflepuff student who's skeptical that Harry is telling the truth, but ultimately joins Dumbledore's Army.

Hannah Abbott – A Hufflepuff student who joins Dumbledore's Army. She's also a prefect.

Regulus Black – Sirius's brother. He joined the Death Eaters and was killed, probably by another Death Eater, around the time that Voldemort disappeared the first time.

Perkins – Mr. Weasley's coworker and officemate at the Ministry.

Mr. Crouch – Mr. Crouch is deceased, but he was formerly Percy Weasley's boss.

Professor Sprout – The Herbology teacher and the Head of Hufflepuff House.

Crabbe – One of Malfoy's cronies and a new Beater on the Slytherin Quidditch team.

Goyle – One of Malfoy's cronies and a new Beater on the Slytherin Quidditch team.

Padma Patil – Parvati's twin in Ravenclaw. She joins Dumbledore's Army.

Madam Hooch – The Quidditch referee at Hogwarts.

Madam Pomfrey – The nurse at Hogwarts.

Hermes – Percy Weasley's owl.

Fawkes – Dumbledore's phoenix.

Rookwood – A Death Eater that Harry sees Voldemort torture in one of his dreams.

Magorian – A centaur who lives in the Forbidden Forest.

Crookshanks – Hermione's big orange cat.

Trevor – Neville's toad.

Hedwig – Harry's snowy owl. She's extremely loyal to Harry.

Pigwidgeon – Ron's tennis ball-sized owl.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

For Harry and his friends' fifth year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, the stakes are higher than ever. With the Dark Lord Voldemort returned to his body and fifth-year students sitting their [O.W.L.](#) exams (standardized tests that determine which classes students can take going forward), Harry finds himself caught between his schoolwork and the turmoil he knows is taking place outside of Hogwarts. Then, with the appointment of Dolores Umbridge to Hogwarts, first as the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher and then as the Hogwarts High Inquisitor (which gives her power to hire, fire, and control every aspect of life at Hogwarts), Harry is faced with complex questions about the purpose of education and how the education system can be manipulated to promote a government agenda--in this case, that of the Ministry of Magic, which seeks to discredit Harry and Dumbledore's eyewitness testimony that Voldemort is back. The novel proposes that the true purpose of education should be to prepare students for life in the real world--though in reality, the education system is something easily corrupted and put to use for other, less noble purposes.

Up until this year, Hogwarts students' education in most subjects has been primarily hands-on. The fact that this carries across most subjects, from Transfiguration to Care of Magical Creatures to Potions and even Divination, suggests that for subjects that require practical skills, actually practicing those skills in a controlled environment is necessary to learn the material. Dolores Umbridge, however, promotes a theory-based approach in her Defense Against the Dark Arts classes. She assigns a textbook titled *Defensive Magical Theory*, which concerns itself with detailing the theory behind the spells, discrediting the effectiveness of counter-curses, and teaching non-confrontational methods of handling conflict. In addition,

she includes no practical lessons, and on the first day of class, she tells students that there's no reason to learn spells or jinxes because there's nothing out there to threaten students.

This approach appears to go against the goal of Hogwarts and definitely goes against the realities of the outside world on several fronts. Harry spends his summer at Number 12 Grimmauld Place cleaning and battling a number of curses and creatures that infest the house, some of which he learned how to tackle in previous years at Hogwarts. It seems, then, that Umbridge's insistence that there's nothing out there to threaten society indicates that she doesn't take Voldemort's return seriously--and she punishes Harry for pointing out that Voldemort doesn't fight fairly and won't stand around to engage in non-violent conflict resolution. Umbridge's installment at Hogwarts is a very clear way for Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic, to weaponize the education system and control exactly what students know and believe about the world. In other words, Fudge understands that the best way to keep up the façade that Voldemort isn't back is to put people in charge who will force this message onto others.

For Harry, who has found himself in situations over the years where practical skills were absolutely essential to his survival, this model of education is offensive and dangerous, and it doesn't prepare students to tackle the very real evil he knows is out there. To remedy this, Hermione encourages Harry to form and lead Dumbledore's Army, a secret student group where Harry teaches the defensive magic he's learned over the years. Importantly, Harry positions the D.A. as not just a place where students can learn practical skills, but as a litmus test of who's willing to believe the truth about Voldemort's return and do so in public. He realizes right away that what most attendees of the first meeting want is to hear Harry's version of what happened last summer, when Voldemort murdered Cedric Diggory, and those who choose to stay and become a part of the group after hearing that story show Harry that they believe his version of events. With this, Harry positions education not just as a way to prepare students for the real world, but also as a vehicle for spreading the truth, even when the truth is subversive and unpleasant. Similarly, the danger that the D.A. members find themselves in thanks to Umbridge's power and suspicion about their group makes it very clear that while getting a thorough education is extremely important, it does at times become dangerous.

With O.W.L.s looming over Harry and his fellow fifth-years and the more advanced N.E.W.T. tests looming over Fred and George Weasley, it quickly becomes apparent that though Fudge's chokehold over the information passed on to students exclusively furthers his own political goals, depriving students of information and denying them practical skills isn't preparing them for even a Ministry-approved future. The career pamphlets that appear in the common rooms state exactly what grades in O.W.L.s are necessary to pursue a particular career--

and for most of them, a passing grade in Defense Against the Dark Arts (which includes a practical exam) is a necessity. By denying students a real education, Fudge is also denying society the next generation of Aurors (Dark Wizard catchers employed by the Ministry), Healers (doctors), and Gringotts Bank treasure hunters. On the other hand, Fred and George make the case that standardized test scores shouldn't be the only assessment of future success. Though the twins earned only three passing O.W.L. grades each, their joke products demonstrate a complex understanding of several magical disciplines, and Hogwarts students' interest in purchasing Weasley products shows that they have the ability to be financially successful, regardless of their test scores.

Taken together, Harry's educational experiences in *Order of the Phoenix* make the case that teaching students practical skills is, within the logic and realities of the Wizarding world, the only appropriate way to prepare them for adult life, whether adulthood entails catching Dark wizards or opening a joke shop. Umbridge's ultimate dismissal from the school and the ways that the novel demonstrates the necessity of practical skills suggests that, in the end, students not only recognize the dangers of exclusively theory-based education but will also, in times of danger and urgency, take matters into their own hands to give themselves the education they know they need.



TRAUMA, SILENCE, AND SPEECH

The previous installment of the Harry Potter series, [*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*](#), ended with a major traumatic experience for Harry: he

witnessed Voldemort return to his body and kill Harry's friend and classmate, Cedric Diggory. Hours afterward, Harry's trauma is compounded when Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic, refuses to believe that Voldemort returned, thereby invalidating Harry's experiences and, thanks to the newspaper articles published by Rita Skeeter that called Harry's mental stability into question, discrediting his story among many in the Wizarding world. *Order of the Phoenix* picks up a month later, during which time Harry has received little meaningful communication with his friends and has had no opportunity to process his experiences. By illustrating how this silence makes Harry feel isolated and unsupported and leads him to question his sanity, *Order of the Phoenix* makes the case that the only effective way to heal from trauma like Harry's is to talk about it. Additionally, it suggests that maintaining silence is extremely dangerous and leaves traumatized individuals vulnerable to manipulation.

It's important to note that while Harry goes back and forth about whether or not he wants to speak about what happened when Cedric died, his anger and his sense of betrayal by the adult mentors in his life, namely Dumbledore and Sirius, suggest that deep down, Harry desperately wants to be taken seriously and have someone listen to his story. In part because

Harry is naturally somewhat suspicious of adult authority figures and in part because of this experience of being ignored by them, he finds that the only place he can turn to reliably seek relief is his friends, Ron and Hermione. However, though Ron and Hermione are the only characters who consistently listen to and support Harry, they are, importantly, children just like Harry is--they don't have the knowledge, skills, or adult maturity to give Harry any new information that might help him understand what's going on. This lack of support, in addition to Dolores Umbridge's campaign to torture Harry and the *Daily Prophet's* summer campaign of turning Harry into a joke, makes Harry feel isolated and as though he can't trust anyone--a situation that in turn makes him feel as though he has to take matters into his own hands.

By illustrating how antagonistic Ministry-affiliated individuals as well as adult mentors whom Harry trusts all make Harry feel isolated and unsupported, the novel suggests that where trauma is concerned, intention doesn't matter. Though both Sirius and Dumbledore act in ways that they believe will ultimately protect Harry, their actions do just as much harm, at least on an emotional level, as the Ministry's do. When Harry tries to tell Sirius about his disturbing "nightmare" of being the snake that attacks Mr. Weasley, Sirius brushes Harry's concern off and suggests that Harry is just overtired. Again, though it's unclear whether Sirius responds in this way because Dumbledore told him to, because he truly thinks Harry is overtired, or because he thinks he's being soothing by insisting it's not a big deal, it ultimately doesn't matter--the fact remains that this response encourages Harry to question his own sanity. In addition, not having any information about the true significance of his dreams means that Harry doesn't take Dumbledore's insistence that Harry take lessons in Occlumency (a branch of magic that protects one's mind from attack) with Snape seriously. Dumbledore reveals too late that the Occlumency lessons were intended to protect Harry from possession or manipulation, information that may have impressed upon Harry the importance of dedicating himself to learning to close his mind.

Because of Harry's isolation and his belief that what he sees in these "dreams" is entirely true (which seems to be confirmed for Harry after the snake dream, as Mr. Weasley does suffer a dangerous snake bite), Harry rushes to the Ministry of Magic with his friends when he dreams that Voldemort has Sirius there and is torturing him. This is eventually revealed to be a trap, and in the ensuing battle between the Order of the Phoenix and the Death Eaters, Sirius dies. During Dumbledore and Harry's discussion later, Dumbledore takes the blame for what happened and suggests that his choices to ignore Harry this year and deny Harry pertinent information in years past is directly responsible for Sirius's death. Dumbledore explains that the "dreams" Harry has are actually the result of a connection to Voldemort, and Voldemort is now aware of this

and used the connection to plant the dream that he was torturing Sirius. Because none of the adults in Harry's life ever shared this with Harry, Harry never knew that such a thing was possible. Because Harry was silenced and lacked support from the adults in his life, he became an easy target for Voldemort. While Harry's trauma creates psychological disturbance of a magical nature, it seems that Rowling may also be suggesting that non-magical trauma in the real world can have similarly dire consequences when it's not processed in a supportive environment.

Further, Dumbledore also explains that Voldemort tried to kill Harry as a baby because of a prophecy that says that at some point, either Harry or Voldemort has to kill the other. By giving Harry this information, Dumbledore enables Harry to make sense of past events and also helps him understand what his future holds. In this way, the novel ultimately asserts the necessity of honesty, conversation, and shared knowledge, and suggests that they're essential to beginning to heal from trauma. It also makes it very clear that developing this openness with Dumbledore in particular is an essential element of Harry's journey forward.



CHOICES, FAMILY, AND LOVE

Having grown up with his abusive Muggle aunt and uncle as adoptive parents, Harry's experiences of family have been fractured at best. To compensate,

Harry relies on Sirius, his godfather and his father's best friend, as well as others who knew his parents, to give him a sense of who his parents were and where he fits into his biological family. However, as the year progresses, Harry learns some unsavory things about his father and begins to question how much he should actually admire him. As Harry grapples with these questions and simultaneously undergoes experiences that impress upon him how important his friends are, Harry begins to come to a more complete understanding of who he is and who's a part of his community. Developing this understanding of the complexity of interpersonal relationships, the novel suggests, is a key element of coming of age and building strong bonds with others.

Harry notes that until he witnesses Snape's memories in the Pensieve, he's never had any difficulty believing his father, James Potter, was a good person. Everyone who mentions James notes how smart, kind, and dedicated he was, and also how much Harry is like him--things that make Harry proud to be James's son. In Snape's memory, however, Harry gets a very different look at James Potter. Snape's memory shows fifteen-year-old James and Sirius tormenting and humiliating young Snape just because they're bored. Harry is sickened to see how self-important James was and watch him show off for girls, including James's future wife, Lily. In this particular memory, Lily seems to loathe James as much as Snape does, something that's just as disturbing for Harry as his father's behavior.

Harry begins to question everything he knows about his parents and, importantly, questions whether he actually wants to be like his father or even take pride in people's comparisons between them. This tension begins to get at one of the questions that the novel raises during Harry's conversation with Dumbledore after the battle at the Ministry: how much is a person's destiny foretold, either by prophecy or genetics, and how much is it a matter of choice? Harry's actions to support his friends, behave kindly to those who are less powerful than he is, and fight for good suggest that at least in terms of his identity, Harry does have the power to be better than his father was at age fifteen--and in the same vein, James's later involvement with the Order of the Phoenix suggests that even he went on to make choices that turned him into a beloved resistance fighter.

The idea of choice and recognizing one's ability to decide on important elements of one's identity also maps onto the novel's exploration of the role of chosen family. Because of Harry's unfortunate biological family situation, he relies most often on mentoring relationships with adults and peer-to-peer friendships with Ron and Hermione to fill the gaps created by his parents' deaths. Given Harry's experiences with this chosen family and the fact that they show up for Harry in every situation where he needs help, the novel makes it abundantly clear that chosen family can be just as meaningful and supportive for a person as biological family, if not more so. Harry isn't the only character who makes this discovery. Harry witnesses Percy Weasley abandon his family in favor of currying favor with the Ministry of Magic, which also demonstrates how an individual can choose identity and allegiance, even when that choice may be a mistake. Harry also watches Sirius fight with his mother's portrait in his childhood home--something that reminds Sirius that he's no longer welcome in his blood family or the place that family called home.

While Dumbledore never seeks to discredit Harry's relationships with chosen family or friends like Ron, Hermione, and the Weasleys (especially given that Dumbledore himself is Harry's greatest mentor and father figure throughout the series), Dumbledore does suggest that there's more to family than quantifiable degrees of support or the lack thereof. Dumbledore explains that Harry must return to the Dursleys every summer because, since Petunia is Lily's sister, Lily's sacrifice for Harry means that living with Petunia will continue to protect Harry from Voldemort thanks to old magic and the power of blood relationships. Importantly, Dumbledore also says that Voldemort scorns this kind of magic, as he doesn't believe that love for other beings (which Dumbledore suggests can be weaponized through families, as with Lily's sacrifice) is powerful or important. This is why Voldemort failed to kill baby Harry in the first place: he never expected that Lily's sacrifice would yield such powerful results--it ultimately turns Harry

into the one person who can kill Voldemort. In the same conversation, Dumbledore also tells Harry that his capacity to love, and his choice to love his friends, family, and school, even when it's painful to do so, is what sets him apart from Voldemort.

With this understanding, Harry is able to begin to come to terms with Sirius's death and James's teenage bad behavior: both ultimately chose love, both of their chosen families and of their blood families, and died to protect those that they loved. This realization allows Harry to start to truly come of age and accept that in order to be successful going forward, he will need to dedicate himself even more fully to his friends and his chosen family, for only through loving them will he be able to defeat Voldemort.



WAR: EXCITEMENT VS. THE MUNDANE

At the beginning of the novel, much of Harry's anger stems from his belief that Ron, Hermione, and Sirius are all closely involved with the exciting and meaningful resistance effort against Voldemort, while he sits, alone and ignored, in his bedroom at the Dursleys' house. However, once Harry travels to number 12, Grimmauld Place--the headquarters of the resistance group the Order of the Phoenix--Harry discovers that resistance is nowhere near as exciting or interesting as he thought it would be, and not just because its members keep most of the Order's information secret from him. With this experience, Harry begins to consider the possibility that resistance efforts are as much, if not more, about feeding people, performing domestic labor, and completing basic spell work as they are about fighting enemies in direct and exciting ways.

Harry's arrival at number 12, Grimmauld Place impresses upon him that living at the headquarters of the resistance doesn't mean that anyone, adults and children alike, is particularly thrilled with the form that the resistance takes. He discovers that his suspicions that Hermione and Ron were keeping things from him and not telling the whole truth in their letters were wrong: Hermione and Ron know very little about the Order and couldn't have told him anything exciting, even if they'd been allowed to.

Instead of learning what the Order is planning, Hermione, Ron, Harry, and the other Weasley children instead spend most of their time cleaning number 12 and "making it fit for habitation," as the house--Sirius's childhood home--has been empty since Sirius's mother died twelve years ago. Mrs. Weasley in particular insists that this is an essential part of the Order's efforts and an effective way to help the Order, which introduces Harry to the idea that resistance and war don't look or feel as showy as he, in his youth, thinks they should. Instead, resistance at this point means creating a safe and comfortable space where the Order can work on its plans and concentrate on fighting Voldemort, rather than fearing that the house itself

(which is infested with all manner of nefarious pests and spells) will turn on them. It's also important to note that Mrs. Weasley, who appears to be one of the most important members of the Order, is celebrated by Order members primarily for her cooking. During the time in which Harry and his friends are at Grimmauld Place, Mrs. Weasley can most often be seen cooking or providing food to Order members or the children. Though Harry might not realize it or accept it, the sheer amount of domestic labor that Mrs. Weasley and Sirius perform at Grimmauld Place illustrates clearly that resistance efforts run on mundane, daily work, not on showy battles or campaigns.

Throughout the novel, Harry discovers that even in the case of actual action--not just the labor that enables that action--the action itself is often boring, even for the adults performing it. For example, Mr. Weasley falls asleep while he's guarding the "weapon" that Voldemort is after one night. Put another way, while Mr. Weasley may be fighting the good fight and performing a completely necessary task, that doesn't mean that the task itself isn't boring and tedious enough to put him to sleep.

The way that Harry talks about the "weapon" itself also shows Harry's youth and misconceptions about what resistance efforts are like. The fact that Harry decides that the Order must be guarding a weapon of some sort betrays Harry's desire for fighting Voldemort to be exciting and violent, not a matter of controlling and protecting information--which is exactly what the Order turns out to be doing. The Order is guarding the prophecy that foretold Harry's birth and the fact that Voldemort would turn Harry into his worst enemy, information that Voldemort believes will help him gain power. It's telling that what Voldemort wants is information and information only, something that on paper and in conversation is far less compelling than weapons, dangerous spells, or powerful magical objects.

While this is all incredibly disheartening and frustrating for Harry, the way in which he organizes his lessons for Dumbledore's Army, his secret Defense Against the Dark Arts student organization, shows that he has internalized the idea that resistance is built on basics and on the acquisition of information, not on extravagant heroism. The entire first term of Harry's lessons focuses on teaching the members of the D.A. useful yet simple spells, such as Disarming or Stunning spells. While not particularly exciting or difficult, Harry recognizes that having these basics is essential to being able to understand and perform the more advanced magic that he teaches in the spring, such as the Patronus Charm. Further, he's open with the members of the D.A. that these simple spells have been the ones he's used against Voldemort and that have allowed him to live to tell the tale. Indeed, when Harry and a few members of the D.A. do face Voldemort's Death Eaters, the spells they use are exclusively the basic yet highly effective ones that Harry

drilled them on in the fall. While the group does come away with a few injuries, they also all walk away from the experience alive—which speaks to the power and the efficacy of these basics in the face of exciting and dangerous confrontations.

As a whole, *Order of the Phoenix* makes the case that in order to be successful in these dangerous confrontations when they do arise, it's necessary to first do the boring work of acquiring a firm grasp of basics, understanding the power of information, and respecting the necessity of making sure people involved in a resistance effort have food, shelter, and a sense of safety as they carry out their work.



PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

As Harry's understanding of the Wizarding world expands, he comes into progressively more contact with non-human beings and the ways in which his society actively discriminates and disempowers them. In addition to looking at the non-human beings that share Harry's world, *Order of the Phoenix* also examines the way that racism and prejudice among humans function through Voldemort's rise to power and in the very systems that organize Hogwarts itself. By exploring these different modes of prejudice, *Order of the Phoenix* makes the case that prejudice and discrimination exist everywhere, even in the most innocuous or unexpected places—and that the best way to combat them is through exposure, developing compassion and empathy, and learning to humanize those who are different.

At the start-of-term feast, the Sorting Hat takes a newly political tone in its song and insists that though it's bound to do its job of sorting students into different Houses, it doesn't actually think that this is a good idea. As the Sorting Hat tells it, this practice of dividing students up (and then adding an element of competition, as with the House and Quidditch Cups) naturally creates divisions, which keep students from engaging with each other as a united student body and as equals. This plays out in a variety of different ways over the course of the school year. Umbridge is able to easily capitalize on the divisions between houses and mobilize the Slytherin students—who, according to the Sorting Hat, are pure-blooded and ambitious, qualities that Umbridge values—to help her carry out her campaign to bring the school under Ministry control. However, even Harry is surprisingly suspicious of Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff students who show up for the first meeting of Dumbledore's Army, suspicion that the Sorting Hat would likely suggest stems from the fact that Harry has never been encouraged to see those students as anything but adversaries. By illustrating how superiority and suspicion flourish among children at Hogwarts thanks to the school's organization, the novel suggests that suspicion and superiority are learned through social systems—and if left unchecked, can evolve into all manner of evil when those children grow up.

Harry begins to take some of the Sorting Hat's advice to heart when Hermione encourages him to form Dumbledore's Army, a secret Defense Against the Dark Arts society. It includes students from Hufflepuff, Gryffindor, and Ravenclaw, and unites them in the shared goal of learning genuine Defense Against the Dark Arts, not the theory-based curriculum that Umbridge teaches. Harry's experiences with non-Gryffindor students through the D.A. helps him to humanize his classmates in other Houses and learn to respect them. Though short-lived, Harry's brief romance with Cho Chang makes it clear to Harry that girls in other Houses are acceptable romantic partners, while Harry's friendship with Luna Lovegood, an eccentric and bullied Ravenclaw student, helps him expand his conception of who deserves pity, kindness, and respect. All of this suggests that spending time with people who are different is an effective way to begin to think critically about these differences and how to overcome them in pursuit of a larger goal. This idea maps onto the adult resistance group the Order of the Phoenix as well—which, in addition to including people who attended Hogwarts as Gryffindors, Ravenclaws, and Hufflepuffs, also includes the former Slytherin, Snape. This camaraderie offers hope that, over time, Harry and his friends will be able to continue to expand their communities and look past their differences.

When it comes to the non-human beings that Harry engages with, the novel presents a much grimmer state of affairs. It mostly takes great care to detail the ways in which the current adults in charge (namely, Cornelius Fudge and Umbridge) are so afraid of change, difference, and giving up power that they're willing to abuse, insult, and legislate against beings who the novel suggests are as intelligent and worthy of respect as any human. Once again, the novel suggests that this fear of difference is something developed in childhood that, if left unexamined, festers and grows. For example, Ron remains dismissive of Hermione's Society for the Promotion of Elf Welfare—having grown up in the Wizarding world, Ron believes that the house-elves' lot in life is normal and not worth challenging. This is a belief that, the novel suggests, Ron has the capacity to overcome as he continues to befriend house-elves like Dobby and learns to see them as deserving of respect and dignity.

While the novel's young characters are overwhelmingly shown to be capable of questioning these assumptions and coming to the understanding everyone—human and not—deserves respect and rights under the law, Umbridge represents what happens when children are never asked to evaluate their preconceptions. Umbridge is known for hating "half-breeds," like the werewolf Remus Lupin, and for passing legislation that makes it very difficult for werewolves to get jobs. She fires Hagrid primarily because he's half giant, and she loathes Dumbledore in part because Dumbledore supports the rights of all beings and wants to include them in Wizarding society.

With this, the novel suggests that the potential for a more inclusive future--both in the Wizarding world and in the reader's world--rests in the hand of the youth, not the adults in charge. By putting aside their prejudices and working together, Harry and his friends offer readers of model of how to fight for fair and equitable education models, treat people who are different--whether because of race, ability, or religion--with respect and empathy, and ultimately, protect their rights under the law. Challenging racism and discriminatory practices, the novel suggests, is the most effective way to stand up to evil.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in [blue text](#) throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



THE FOUNTAIN OF MAGICAL BRETHREN

The Fountain of Magical Brethren consists of a huge gold statue at the Ministry of Magic depicting a witch, a wizard, a centaur, a goblin, and a house-elf. Though the statue is impressive, Harry notices almost immediately that the depictions of the non-human creatures are decidedly problematic: the centaur and the goblin look at the humans adoringly, something that, in Harry's experience, real centaurs and goblins would never do. This suggests that the fountain represents Fudge and the Ministry's vision of an idealized world, one in which wizards reign supreme and non-human creatures accept the Ministry's authority and their own subjugation without question. As disturbing as these portrayals are, it's also important to note what beings the ministry leaves out--namely, merpeople, giants, and "half-breeds" like werewolves--as this suggests that in the Ministry's eyes, those beings will never be accepted members of society or receive any rights. This again casts the fountain as one that visually represents Fudge's agenda for who's included in society and who isn't.

When Dumbledore animates the figures in the fountain and uses them to protect Harry from Voldemort, he symbolically destroys Fudge's narrow and discriminatory vision of the future and suggests that non-human beings are important and should be brought into the fold, as this is the only way that the side of good will be able to defeat Voldemort in the coming showdown. Further, destroying the fountain altogether leaves room for the Ministry to create a new fountain that symbolizes a better, more equal world and gives non-human beings the respect and dignity they deserve.



O.W.L.S AND N.E.W.T.S

O.W.L.s (Ordinary Wizarding Levels) and N.E.W.T.s (Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Tests) are administered in the fifth and seventh years to Hogwarts students, and a student's grade on those tests determines what jobs students can apply for and hold as adults. The tests' existence encapsulates the Ministry's vision of what a good, proper future looks like for students: no matter what particular job a student chooses, it's one that's Ministry-approved. However, several characters, including Fred, George, and Harry, show through their actions that these standardized tests are only one way to measure success and in actuality, they don't reveal anything especially useful about students. Despite Fred and George's three passing O.W.L.s each, they still manage to develop compelling joke products and open a shop, proof that while school itself was useful for them, the tests were entirely useless. Harry, though he's a middling student, is also very successful fighting Voldemort in the real world despite not even having scores yet. Through Fred, George, and Harry's experiences, the novel suggests that the O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s actually represent the closed-mindedness of the Ministry, its desire to control the population by dictating young people's futures, and its unwillingness to look at people as multifaceted individuals.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Scholastic edition of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* published in 2004.

Chapter One Quotes

☞ And then, as his feeling of frustration peaked, his certainty leaked away.

Perhaps it hadn't been a magical sound after all. Perhaps he was so desperate for the tiniest sign of contact from the world to which he belonged that he was simply overreacting to perfectly ordinary noises. Could he be *sure* it hadn't been the sound of something breaking inside a neighbor's house?

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Mundungus Fletcher

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 7

Explanation and Analysis

After Harry has some time to think about a loud sound he heard in the neighborhood—which sounded like someone Apparating (magically appearing or disappearing), but

could've been a car backfiring—he begins to question his initial belief that it was the sound of Apparation. Especially when the narration points out specifically that Harry is desperate for contact (in other words, he hasn't had contact) with the Wizarding world, it shows that when Harry is in a situation where he doesn't have anyone to validate what he's experiencing, he begins to question himself. Throughout the novel, Harry's experiences also reinforce that the opposite is true: when people listen to Harry and believe what he says, he feels more secure in himself and in his interpretations of events. This flags for the reader to be on the lookout for instances when Harry isn't able or willing to talk to people about something happening to him, as those situations might cause him to not trust his reality.

Chapter Four Quotes

☞ "I know, Harry. But you see what they're doing? They want to turn you into someone nobody will believe. Fudge is behind it, I'll bet anything. They want wizards on the street to think you're just some stupid boy who's a bit of a joke, who tells ridiculous tall stories because he loves being famous and wants to keep it going."

Related Characters: Hermione Granger (speaker), Harry Potter, Lord Voldemort, Cornelius Fudge

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 74

Explanation and Analysis

In the hour after Harry arrives at number twelve, Grimmauld Place, Hermione and Ron tell Harry about the *Daily Prophet's* crusade to discredit Harry and Dumbledore by turning him into a running joke. By creating the image of Harry as a person who's just a liar, Fudge insures that his story—the one saying that Voldemort isn't back and everything is fine—is the one that people believe, as with the way Fudge has orchestrated this, he's the credible one in the eyes of most.

Hermione's willingness to tell Harry this unpleasant truth speaks to the power of their friendship. Because Hermione is willing to give Harry the information that's true and that he needs, Harry is able to go on to do things that allow him to tell his story, oftentimes facilitated by Hermione. Most importantly, by telling him the truth and not trying to keep this from him, Hermione shows Harry that she's someone he can take seriously and trust to be there for him—unlike, as far as Harry is concerned, most of the adults in the novel.

Chapter Six Quotes

☞ "So, got there yet?" said George eagerly.

"The weapon Sirius mentioned?" said Harry.

"Let slip, more like," said Fred with relish, now sitting next to Ron. "We didn't hear about *that* on the old Extendables, did we?"

"What d'you reckon it is?" said Harry.

"Could be anything," said Fred.

"But there can't be anything worse than the *Avada Kedavra* curse, can there?" said Ron. "What's worse than death?"

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Fred Weasley, George Weasley (speaker), Sirius Black, Lord Voldemort

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 100

Explanation and Analysis

Following the conversation in which Sirius tells Harry, Hermione, and several of the Weasley children that Voldemort is after a "weapon," Fred, George, Harry, and Ron wonder what the weapon might be. It's telling that all of them seem to believe that the weapon is a weapon in the conventional sense of the word—in other words, that Voldemort is after the wizard equivalent of a gun or something similar. The novel will go on to show that this belief is something Harry and the Weasley boys hold because of their youth and inexperience with resistance movements and conducting war. At this point, they don't understand that what the Order is protecting from Voldemort is information, nothing more. Further, though Voldemort believes that he'd be able to use the information to thwart Harry and in doing so, would certainly kill more people, the point of obtaining this information isn't just to cause mass destruction. This sets up the idea that going forward, Harry and the Weasley siblings are going to learn that information can be just as valuable as objects or spells that cause destruction.

☞ "Does it matter if she's my cousin?" snapped Sirius. "As far as I'm concerned, they're not my family. She's certainly not my family. I haven't seen her since I was your age, unless you count a glimpse of her coming into Azkaban. Do you think I'm proud of having relatives like her?"

Related Characters: Sirius Black (speaker), Harry Potter,

Bellatrix Lestrange, Narcissa Malfoy

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 114

Explanation and Analysis

When Harry is shocked to learn that Bellatrix Lestrange and Narcissa Malfoy are Sirius's cousins, Sirius loses his temper and insists that those women aren't his family. In doing this, Sirius helps to guide Harry toward a conception of family that focuses more on actions and how people treat each other, and less on blood relationships.

Given that Harry also has relatives that he's not proud of in the Dursleys, learning that Sirius is in the same boat shouldn't be something that's so shocking for Harry. The fact that it is shocking reminds the reader that Harry is still very young and focused on his own experiences, not necessarily on the fact that while he's unique, his life shares broad similarities with the lives of many other people. As Harry continues to grow and come of age, he not only is able to recognize that others around him have similar experiences, he's also able to come to a more nuanced view on the importance of focusing on one's chosen family and friends, not fixating on who's related to whom by blood.

underage and cannot participate in the Order of the Phoenix proper. However, notice too that Harry doesn't know what the Order is doing, yet he still seems to believe that what they're doing is important. Learning this means that Harry is gaining an appreciation for the mundane and the boring work that so often takes up time—and yet, is completely necessary to make a resistance effective. Indeed, Harry has spent most of his time at Grimmauld Place cleaning and removing things from the house that could make life there dangerous if given the chance or left unchecked. The novel's focus on this cleaning, as well as on Mrs. Weasley's cooking while they're all at Grimmauld Place, suggests that it's this domestic labor that's the real work of the Order of the Phoenix at this point—for without that labor, the important tasks that other members are carrying out cannot happen at all.

☹️ Ron had not asked Dumbledore to give him the prefect badge. This was not Ron's fault. Was he, Harry, Ron's best friend in the world, going to sulk because he didn't have a badge, laugh with the twins behind Ron's back, ruin this for Ron when, for the first time, he had beaten Harry at something?

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Professor Albus Dumbledore, Fred Weasley, George Weasley

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 167

Explanation and Analysis

In a moment alone after both Hermione and Ron learn that they've been made prefects, Harry decides how he's going to treat Ron going forward. Importantly, Harry chooses not to ruin this experience for Ron. In doing so, Harry tells Ron through his words and through his actions that he'll be there for him and support him, unlike people like Fred and George who delight in tormenting Ron for following their older brothers down this path. Further, though Mrs. Weasley is similarly proud of Ron, she doesn't have the ability to make him feel truly comfortable with this honor given that she's not a person who will be around to see what kind of a prefect Ron is. Harry, on the other hand, will be at Hogwarts watching Ron figure out how to use his power and decide how he wants to behave. Showing him this kindness and respect now means that Ron will have less incentive to abuse it later. It also shows Harry maturely recognizing that he is usually the one who “beats” Ron at everything, so he shouldn't be jealous or spiteful just because Ron has finally achieved something Harry did not.

Chapter Nine Quotes

☹️ The fact was that living at the headquarters of the anti-Voldemort movement was not nearly as interesting or exciting as Harry would have expected before he experienced it. Though members of the Order of the Phoenix came and went regularly, sometimes staying for meals, sometimes only for a few minutes' whispered conversation, Mrs. Weasley made sure that Harry and the others were kept well out of earshot (whether Extendable or normal) and nobody, not even Sirius, seemed to feel that Harry needed to know anything more than he had heard on the night of his arrival.

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Sirius Black, Lord Voldemort, Mrs. Weasley

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 160

Explanation and Analysis

After a few weeks living at number twelve, Grimmauld Place, Harry finally understands that the resistance isn't especially interesting or exciting—at least to him, as he's

Chapter Eleven Quotes

☞☞ *I sort you into Houses
Because that is what I'm for,
But this year I'll go further,
Listen closely to my song:
Though condemned I am to split you
Still I worry that it's wrong
Though I must fulfill my duty
And must quarter every year
Still I wonder whether Sorting
May not bring the end I fear.*

Related Characters: The Sorting Hat (speaker), Lord Voldemort

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 206

Explanation and Analysis

Before the Sorting Ceremony, the Sorting Hat sings its song, per tradition—but this year, the Sorting Hat gets political and uses its song to give the school a warning. The Sorting Hat takes issue with the fact that per Hogwarts tradition, each class is sorted into the four Houses. It believes that splitting students up like this encourages students in different Houses to see each other as adversaries, not as equal classmates and attendees of the same institution. The Hat implies that given what's going on in the outside world, the kind of fear of difference that Voldemort espouses can be traced to what Voldemort learned during his time at Hogwarts—especially given that most Death Eaters come from Voldemort's House, Slytherin. While the Sorting Hat doesn't condemn Slytherin House specifically, it still suggests that splitting students up doesn't do them any favors and, if students don't learn to see each other as allies and as equals, can have dire real-world consequences.

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 243

Explanation and Analysis

During Harry's first Defense Against the Dark Arts lesson with Umbridge, Umbridge takes issue with the variety of teachers who have held the post and specifically, with Lupin, the "dangerous half-breed" she mentions here. For someone familiar with the series, it's worth noting that Lupin was the first (and only) honest professor who taught students practical, useful information in a way that made sense—and then informed the next professor of what students knew, so that professor could build on what students learned from him. All of this goes to show that the fact that Lupin is a werewolf has little impact on his effectiveness as a teacher, especially since several of Harry's classmates go on to defend Lupin to Umbridge.

Umbridge's choice to call Lupin dangerous and to insist that he's less than human shows how, with her language, she can also attempt to encourage students to dehumanize people and non-human beings that are different. This also shows that while Umbridge isn't in league with Voldemort, she still shares many of the same beliefs as he does—she just goes about spreading her beliefs in a less overtly violent (but still just as meaningful and damaging) way.

☞☞ "Is it true that you shouted at Professor Umbridge?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"You called her a liar?"

"Yes."

"You told her He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is back?"

"Yes."

Professor McGonagall sat down behind her desk, frowning at Harry. Then she said, "Have a biscuit, Potter."

Related Characters: Professor Minerva McGonagall (speaker), Harry Potter, Dolores Umbridge, Lord Voldemort

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 248

Explanation and Analysis

When Umbridge sends Harry to Professor McGonagall so she can punish him for speaking out in class, McGonagall is displeased with Harry, yet also supports him for speaking out by offering him a cookie. This passage is then illustrative

Chapter Twelve Quotes

☞☞ "I do not wish to criticize the way things have been run at this school," she said, an unconvincing smile stretching her wide mouth, "but you have been exposed to some very irresponsible wizards in this class, very irresponsible indeed—not to mention," she gave a nasty little laugh, "extremely dangerous half-breeds."

Related Characters: Dolores Umbridge (speaker), Harry Potter, Professor Albus Dumbledore, Remus Lupin

of the fine line that McGonagall has to walk as a teacher and as a member of the Order of the Phoenix—and therefore, as someone who believes Harry is right about Voldemort. McGonagall recognizes that Umbridge has the power to make her life and Harry's a nightmare, given that Umbridge is at Hogwarts on Fudge's behalf with the goal of bringing the school under Ministry control. Because of this, McGonagall must encourage Harry to not be rude to Umbridge. However, offering Harry sweets is a way for McGonagall to praise him through her actions and tell Harry that she believes him. Though this is confusing for Harry, he continues to trust McGonagall going forward, suggesting that her affirmation of Harry's story allows him to trust her to be honest with him and support him in difficult times.

whole goes to great lengths to show that this is impossible. Umbridge isn't quite as evil as Voldemort, as she's not out killing people in the name of blood purity, but that doesn't mean that she's not also power-hungry, spiteful, and afraid of people who are different.

The laws that Sirius mentions Umbridge drafting reminds the reader that discriminatory beliefs can easily become law, depending on who's in power and if anyone can check them. By drafting this legislation, Umbridge empowers and enables those who share her fear and distrust of werewolves to discriminate against them more openly. Eventually, enabling behavior like this leads to increasingly more drastic action, thereby creating more individuals like Voldemort.

Chapter Fourteen Quotes

☛☛ "I know her by reputation and I'm sure she's no Death Eater—"

"She's foul enough to be one," said Harry darkly and Ron and Hermione nodded vigorously in agreement.

"Yes, but the world isn't split into good people and Death Eaters," said Sirius with a wry smile. "I know she's a nasty piece of work, though—you should hear Remus talk about her."

"Does Lupin know her?" asked Harry quickly, remembering Umbridge's comments about dangerous half-breeds during her first lesson.

"No," said Sirius, "but she drafted a bit of anti-werewolf legislation two years ago that makes it almost impossible for him to get a job."

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Sirius Black (speaker), Dolores Umbridge, Hermione Granger, Ron Weasley, Remus Lupin

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 302

Explanation and Analysis

When Sirius speaks to Harry through the Gryffindor common room fireplace, he insists that Umbridge isn't a Death Eater, but is quick to point out that that doesn't mean she's not a bad person. By making this distinction, Sirius helps Harry, Ron, and Hermione to come to a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes good, evil, and the space in between in the real world. While Harry might crave a simple and easily understood world in which people are either good or in league with Voldemort, the series as a

Chapter Fifteen Quotes

☛☛ "'Hogwarts is a school, not an outpost of Cornelius Fudge's office,' said Madam Marchbanks. 'This is a further disgusting attempt to discredit Albus Dumbledore.' (For a full account of Madam Marchbanks' alleged links to subversive goblin groups, turn to page 17)."

Related Characters: Hermione Granger (speaker), Dolores Umbridge, Professor Albus Dumbledore, Cornelius Fudge

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 308

Explanation and Analysis

Hermione reads aloud the article in the *Daily Prophet* detailing Fudge's appointment of Umbridge to the post of Hogwarts High Inquisitor, which gives her much more control over the school and how it's run. Most important here is the way that the writer of the article links Madam Marchbanks to Dumbledore to suggest that she's stubbornly and foolishly spreading lies, just like the *Prophet* thinks Dumbledore is doing. Doing this encourages other people who might be curious about Dumbledore's story, or who might agree with Madam Marchbanks that Hogwarts is a school, not an arm of the Ministry, from speaking out—it threatens to drag them through the mud in the paper as well. Then, by linking her with "subversive goblin groups," the *Prophet* also suggests that she's not trustworthy by connecting her to non-human magical beings that many wizards treat with fear and skepticism. In the little bit that the series has explored goblins, it's painted them as a group that exists in its own insular bubble within the Wizarding community, but as a group that desperately wants rights

and recognition from the wizards around them. The goblins aren't thought trustworthy by many, and by aligning Madam Marchbanks with the goblins, the Prophet blatantly attempts to turn readers against her and undercut her credibility.

Chapter Seventeen Quotes

☞ "You know, I don't get why Fred and George only got three O.W.L.s each," said Harry, watching as Fred, George, and Lee collected gold from the eager crowd. "They really know their stuff..."

Related Characters: Harry Potter (speaker), Fred Weasley, George Weasley, Percy Weasley

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 368

Explanation and Analysis

In the common room one night, Harry watches Fred and George demonstrate their Puking Pastilles (one of their joke candies) and remarks that judging by what they're able to produce in terms of magical joke products, they know more about magic than their three passing O.W.L. scores would let on. This shows that Harry is beginning to suspect that O.W.L.s aren't the only ticket into the adult Wizarding world; Fred and George are clearly doing well for themselves even without high test scores.

This also opens up the possibility that O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s are poor ways to measure students' success in the first place. Though Percy Weasley did well on his O.W.L.s and presumably aced his N.E.W.T. exams as well, he's currently putting his test scores to work discrediting Harry and inadvertently helping Voldemort return to power. All of this suggests that more important than learning the material is actually what else students learn at school, including social skills, critical thinking skills, and in Fred and George's case, the ability to understand what students want from a joke shop intent on getting them out of boring classes.

Chapter Nineteen Quotes

☞ He and the D.A. were resisting under her very nose, doing the very thing that she and the Ministry most feared, and whenever he was supposed to be reading Wilbert Slinkhard's book during her lessons he dwelled instead on satisfying memories of their most recent meetings, remembering how Neville had successfully disarmed Hermione, how Colin Creevy had mastered the Impediment Jinx after three meetings' hard effort, how Parvati Patil had produced such a good Reductor Curse that she had reduced the table carrying all the Sneakoscopes to dust.

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Dolores Umbridge, Hermione Granger, Neville Longbottom, Parvati Patil

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 397

Explanation and Analysis

In the first few weeks of D.A. meetings, Harry is thrilled at how well everyone is progressing, as well as how satisfying it is to do exactly what Umbridge told them not to do. He feels like he's regained his agency and is helping other students to find theirs as well, and also feels like he's really helping in the resistance against Voldemort. Notice also that the examples Harry gives are examples of relatively simple spells and curses that Harry has been able to produce for years now. Though simple, this doesn't mean that they're useless or boring, however. This stands in stark contrast to how Harry first thought of the Order of the Phoenix. He expected that the resistance to Voldemort would be far more exciting than it actually was—and in reality, most of the work was boring and menial domestic labor. Similarly, by starting the D.A. with these basics, Harry can pass on what he learned about the importance of basics and "boring" things to help successfully craft a resistance and, in the case of the D.A., have a foundation that allows members to perform more difficult magic later in the year.

Chapter Twenty-One Quotes

☞ A great wave of relief broke over Harry. Here at last was proof that he had not imagined these creatures, that they were real: Hagrid knew about them too. He looked eagerly at Ron, but Ron was still staring around into the trees and after a few seconds he whispered, "Why doesn't Hagrid call again?"

Related Characters: Ron Weasley (speaker), Harry Potter, Luna Lovegood, Hagrid, Cedric Diggory

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 445

Explanation and Analysis

In Hagrid's first Care of Magical Creatures lesson, he introduces his class to thestrals, winged horse-like creatures that live in the Forbidden Forest and are invisible to people unless they've seen someone die. Harry can now see the thestrals after seeing Cedric Diggory die in June. Up to this point, Harry has wondered if he's going crazy since he can see the thestrals and none of his friends, aside from Luna Lovegood, can see them. This makes Harry feel alone, especially since he already has the Ministry and the *Daily Prophet* making a point to question Harry's lived experience and tell him he's wrong. Harry's sense of relief at learning that Hagrid can see the thestrals and that he's not going crazy speaks to the power of having one's truth validated by a trustworthy outside party—Harry's spirits lift considerably as more people continue to come to his side, and as he receives more evidence like this that suggests that he can and should believe his own lived experiences.

more to this than a sudden feeling of being violently snakelike.

Because neither Dumbledore nor Sirius ever tell Harry that he's sharing thoughts and feelings with Voldemort when these things happen, Harry is reduced to continuing to question his own reality as he tries to figure out what's going on. Given that he has nobody to guide him or help him make sense of what's going on, Harry comes to questionable conclusions about all of this—namely, that he's alone and a danger to others. Though he's not a danger, this is a valid concern—which, again, is something that Dumbledore could make known to Harry by giving him some basic information about what's going on, rather than leaving Harry to muddle through alone.

☞ "But that's not all, said Harry in a voice only a little above a whisper. "Sirius, I...I think I'm going mad...Back in Dumbledore's office, just before we took the Portkey...for a couple of seconds there I thought I was a snake, I *felt* like one—my scar really hurt when I was looking at Dumbledore—Sirius, I wanted to attack him—"

He could only see a sliver of Sirius's face; the rest was in darkness.

"It must have been the aftermath of the vision, that's all," said Sirius. "You were still thinking of the dream or whatever it was and—"

"It wasn't like that," said Harry, shaking his head. "It was like something rose up inside me, like there's a *snake* inside me—"

"You need to sleep," said Sirius firmly.

Chapter Twenty-Two Quotes

☞ *Don't be stupid, you haven't got fangs*, he told himself, trying to keep calm, though the hand on his butterbeer was shaking. *You were lying in bed, you weren't attacking anyone...*

But then, what happened in Dumbledore's office? he asked himself. *I felt like I wanted to attack Dumbledore too...*

Related Characters: Harry Potter (speaker), Professor Albus Dumbledore, Lord Voldemort, Mr. Weasley

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 478

Explanation and Analysis

While Harry, Sirius, and the Weasleys wait for news about Mr. Weasley and his injuries, Harry argues with himself about whether or not he actually attacked Mr. Weasley and wanted to attack Dumbledore. Given the information Harry has at this point—which isn't much—his confusion is understandable. In particular, it's so confusing because everything that's happening to Harry is clearly out of character (he's not violent and though he's upset with Dumbledore for ignoring him, he's not out to get Dumbledore by any means), which suggests that there's

Related Characters: Harry Potter, Sirius Black (speaker), Professor Albus Dumbledore, Lord Voldemort, Mr. Weasley

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 481

Explanation and Analysis

Following the news that Mr. Weasley is going to be okay after a snakebite, Harry confides in Sirius and tells him that in his dream, he *was* the snake, and in Dumbledore's office, he suddenly felt that he wanted to bite Dumbledore as well. Though the reader and Harry later learn that Sirius passes on what Harry says in this exchange to Dumbledore, it's telling that he doesn't do anything about it at this point, when Harry really needs someone to tell him that he's not going mad and he's not at fault. By insisting that Harry just needs to go to sleep, Sirius shuts Harry down and tells him

that he's not willing to talk about this difficult topic—something that makes Harry feel as though he has to tackle things on his own in the future. This also deprives Harry of information he needs and could use to come to an understanding of what's happening to him. Without this information, Harry feels even more alone and like he can't ask for help, as Sirius shows him here that even when Harry does ask, he's not going to receive it.

☞ "Bitten by a werewolf, poor chap. No cure at all."
 "A werewolf?" whispered Mrs. Weasley, looking alarmed. "Is he safe in a public ward? Shouldn't he be in a private room?"
 "It's two weeks till full moon," Mr. Weasley reminded her quietly.

Related Characters: Mr. Weasley, Mrs. Weasley (speaker), Remus Lupin

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 488

Explanation and Analysis

When Harry and the Weasleys go to visit Mr. Weasley for the first time, he points out the other patients in his ward, one of whom was bitten by a werewolf. Mrs. Weasley's concern reminds the reader that fearing werewolves is something that, in British Wizarding society, is something normal and accepted—even from someone like Mrs. Weasley, who works closely with Lupin with regularity. This speaks to how deep in the fabric of society this fear and sense of difference runs, as Mrs. Weasley clearly doesn't see werewolves as safe people to have around people she loves.

Unlike Umbridge when she talks about "half-breeds," Mrs. Weasley whispers her concern—but regardless, voicing the concern still makes it clear that the Wizarding world is built on these divisions that set up a hierarchy of different people and non-human beings. Again, this reminds the reader that one doesn't have to be truly evil like Voldemort to not be a morally complicated person. In the case of Mrs. Weasley, she can be the heart of the resistance and spend her time doing work for the Order and even still, she can harbor these troubling ideas about people who are different.

Chapter Twenty-Three Quotes

☞ "So that's it, is it?" he said loudly. "*Stay there?* That's all anyone could tell me after I got attacked by those dementors too! Just stay put while the grown-ups sort it out, Harry! We won't bother telling you anything, though, because your tiny little brain might not be able to cope with it!"

Related Characters: Harry Potter (speaker), Professor Albus Dumbledore, Phineas Nigellus

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 495

Explanation and Analysis

As Harry considers leaving Grimmauld Place to protect his friends and the Order in case Voldemort is possessing him, Phineas Nigellus—who has a portrait in Harry's room and one in Dumbledore's office, and can go between the two—passes a message to Harry from Dumbledore telling him to stay put. While Phineas goes on to taunt and chastise Harry for losing his temper in this moment, it's worth noting that Harry has every reason to be upset with the way things are going and how the adults are treating him right now. Dumbledore still refuses to look at Harry, while Sirius acted like he didn't think that Harry's dream and strange urge to attack Dumbledore was anything to worry about.

To Harry's credit, he's right to be upset that nobody will tell him anything. As Dumbledore later admits, not sharing pertinent information with Harry has disastrous consequences and means that Harry is vulnerable to Voldemort's manipulation attempts. Put another way, while Harry's anger looks like normal teenage angst to someone like Phineas, Harry is angry about very real and very important things—but, possibly *because* his anger looks like teenage angst and nothing more, nobody tells Harry information that could help him process what's going on and make better decisions in the future.

Chapter Twenty-Seven Quotes

☞ "Herd?" said Lavender in a confused voice, and Harry knew she was thinking of cows. "What—oh!" Comprehension dawned on her face. "There are *more of you?*" she said, stunned.

"Did Hagrid breed you, like the thestrals?" asked Dean eagerly. Firenze turned his head very slowly to face Dean, who seemed to realize at once that he had said something very offensive.

"I didn't—I meant—sorry," he finished in a hushed voice.

"Centaur's are not the servants or playthings of humans," said Firenze quietly.

Related Characters: Firenze, Lavender Brown, Dean Thomas (speaker), Hagrid

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 601-02

Explanation and Analysis

During the Gryffindors' first Divination class with the centaur Firenze, Lavender and Dean both ask questions that, upon second thought, are rude and betray how little they know about centaurs. Dean's question in particular betrays a view that centaurs are nothing more than subservient animals, despite the fact of Firenze's current position as a Hogwarts teacher.

The way that Dean and Lavender ask these questions speaks to the way that the Wizarding world introduces young people to ideas of difference. Though Dean can possibly be forgiven, since his parents are Muggles, Lavender is wizard-born—and even having grown up in the Wizarding world, Lavender isn't aware that centaurs live in the Forbidden Forest and have a rich culture, just like any other group of people. While both of their questions were asked in innocence and genuine curiosity, not malice, this shows that the seeds of discrimination and fear are planted early and if not checked by someone like Firenze, who can set Dean and Lavender straight about the kind of beings centaurs are, can grow into horrific violence and discriminatory legislation as adults.

James tormenting Snape for what appeared to be no reason. The memory itself causes Harry to question how much pride he should actually take when people tell him that he's just like his father. While that was once something that made him proud, he now suspects that there's more to his father that's not as wonderful.

Though Harry does choose to speak to Sirius about this, what he doesn't realize here is that being like his father doesn't sentence him to be the same kind of jerk that fifteen-year-old James was. Harry has the opportunity to make choices to advocate for people who have less power and privilege than he does, and he has the choice to not pick on people he doesn't like for no reason. Once Harry accepts that his future is as much a matter of what kind of person he chooses to be as it is about genetics, Harry can come to peace with what he saw and understand that being like his father isn't the same as *being* his father at age fifteen.

Chapter Thirty-Two Quotes

💬 "I'm trying to say—Voldemort knows you, Harry! He took Ginny down into the Chamber of Secrets to lure you there, it's the kind of thing he does, he knows you're the—the sort of person who'd go to Sirius's aid! What if he's just trying to get you into the Department of Myst—"

Related Characters: Hermione Granger (speaker), Harry Potter, Sirius Black, Lord Voldemort, Ginny Weasley

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 734

Explanation and Analysis

While Harry shouts about needing to rescue Sirius from Voldemort in the Department of Mysteries, Hermione points out that Harry likes saving people, and that's a quality that Voldemort might use to try to manipulate Harry.

Importantly, Hermione is right: Voldemort is tricking Harry, and Sirius isn't at the Department of Mysteries at all. This introduces the reader to the fact that people who love and care for others can be manipulated into doing foolish things in the name of saving their loved ones. With this, Harry learns that loving is dangerous and can be fraught, but it's still something that's important to continue to do, no matter how hard it is.

Hermione's ability to pick up on what Voldemort is angling for suggests that because she's been an outside observer to Harry's exploits over the years, as well as to what sorts of things Voldemort does to trick people, she's in a unique

Chapter Twenty-Nine Quotes

💬 He could abandon the plan and simply learn to live with the memory of what his father had done on a summer's day more than twenty years ago...

And then he remembered Sirius in the fire upstairs in the Gryffindor common room... "You're less like your father than I thought...The risk would've been what made it fun for James..."

But did he want to be like his father anymore?

Related Characters: Sirius Black (speaker), Harry Potter, Professor Severus Snape, James Potter

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 667

Explanation and Analysis

Harry deliberates whether or not to use Umbridge's fire to speak to Sirius about what he saw in Snape's memory:

position to tell Harry the truth about what's going on—even if he won't accept it. Regardless, it's important for Hermione to insist on speaking this truth and telling Harry what she thinks, and she's able to do this because she and Harry are such close and trusting friends.

Chapter Thirty-Three Quotes

☞ Still pointing her shaking wand at Magorian, she continued, "Law Fifteen B states clearly that 'Any attack by a magical creature who is deemed to have near-human intelligence, and therefore considered responsible for its actions—'"

"'Near-human intelligence?'" repeated Magorian, as Bane and several others roared with rage and pawed the ground.

Related Characters: Dolores Umbridge, Magorian (speaker), Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, Bane

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 754

Explanation and Analysis

When Hermione lures Umbridge into the woods and orchestrates a confrontation with the centaurs, Umbridge insults them spectacularly. The way that Umbridge speaks to and about the centaurs shows what might happen if Dean—who asked earlier in the novel if Hagrid breeds centaurs—hadn't been reprimanded by a centaur for asking something so rude and thoughtless. Umbridge presumably hasn't been asked to question why she's afraid of centaurs and why she thinks they're less intelligent. This suggests that what she's truly afraid of is the fact that they're different, not anything else about them. By using Umbridge to illustrate one of the extreme possible results of not learning to appreciate diversity, Rowling is able to make the case that children and young people have the ability to rethink their preconceptions early and in doing so, have the capacity to make the world a better place for themselves as well as for others.

Chapter Thirty-Seven Quotes

☞ "Like the fact that the person Sirius cared most about in the world was you," said Dumbledore quietly. "Like the fact that you were coming to regard Sirius as a mixture of father and brother. Voldemort knew already, of course, that Sirius was in the Order, that you knew where he was—but Kreacher's information made him realize that the one person whom you would go to any lengths to rescue was Sirius Black."

Related Characters: Professor Albus Dumbledore (speaker), Harry Potter, Sirius Black, Lord Voldemort, Kreacher, Narcissa Malfoy

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 831

Explanation and Analysis

During Harry and Dumbledore's conversation following the battle at the Ministry, Dumbledore shares that Kreacher has been passing information to Voldemort via Narcissa Malfoy about the nature of Harry and Sirius's relationship. Dumbledore made it clear to Harry early in their conversation that while Sirius bound Kreacher to keep certain things secret, he underestimated the significance of the information that he *didn't* forbid. This shows that "good guys" like Sirius are just as liable to underestimate the power of love and a close, familial relationship as someone like Voldemort is. Voldemort undervalues love and met his initial downfall because he never took into account the power of sacrifice—and yet, he also knows how to weaponize love to lure Harry out of school and into the waiting hands of his Death Eaters.

☞ "Sirius did not hate Kreacher," said Dumbledore. "He regarded him as a servant unworthy of much interest or notice. Indifference and neglect often do much more damage than outright dislike...the fountain we destroyed tonight told a lie. We wizards have mistreated and abused our fellows for too long, and we are now reaping our reward."

Related Characters: Professor Albus Dumbledore (speaker), Harry Potter, Sirius Black, Kreacher

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 833-34

Explanation and Analysis

After Harry takes offense to Dumbledore's implication that Sirius's hatred of Kreacher led to his death, Dumbledore tries to impress upon Harry that neglect and dehumanization can be even more damaging than outright hatred. Notably, Dumbledore brings up the Fountain of Magical Brethren, the statue that he destroyed earlier at the Ministry to save Harry from Voldemort. The fountain depicted a witch and wizard surrounded by a centaur, goblin, and a house-elf, all of whom looked adoringly at the wizard. Dumbledore suggests that the fountain represents an idealized and unrealistic view of how Wizarding society treats non-human beings. Treating them poorly and expecting the subservience depicted in the statue, Dumbledore suggests, is an effective way to turn those being against wizards and deprive wizards of important allies going forward. By destroying the fountain, Dumbledore symbolically destroyed this old order and made way for Harry and his generation to change things for the better, learn from the mistakes of people like Sirius, and embrace non-human beings as allies and equals.

💬 "I cared about you too much," said Dumbledore simply. "I cared more for your happiness than your knowing the truth, more for your peace of mind than my plan, more for your life than the lives that might be lost if the plan failed. In other words, I acted exactly as Voldemort expects we fools who love to act."

Related Characters: Professor Albus Dumbledore (speaker), Harry Potter, Lord Voldemort

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 838

Explanation and Analysis

Dumbledore explains to Harry how, in the four years previous, he actively chose to not tell Harry about the prophecy and why Voldemort tried to kill Harry as a baby, all in the name of keeping Harry happy. When Dumbledore suggests that he acted just like Voldemort would expect him to, it shows that loving someone sometimes makes a person blind to the need to work for the greater good—which Dumbledore suggests has suffered because he chose to keep information secret from Harry.

By sharing this with Harry, Dumbledore takes responsibility for Sirius's death and traces it back to his choice to withhold information. This reminds the reader that one of the most dangerous things a person can do is not speak to others and share information, as Dumbledore implies that Sirius's death, as well as a lot of Harry's angst and fear throughout the novel, could've been avoided had Harry had the appropriate information at least a year ago.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER ONE

On the hottest day of the summer, Harry Potter lies in a flowerbed under the living room window of Number 4, Privet Drive. He wants to watch the news, but his Uncle Vernon won't let him. He listens to Vernon and Aunt Petunia talk about their son Dudley, who's out with his friends vandalizing the park or beating up kids. The news begins and Harry breathes a sigh of relief: if the top story is a baggage handlers' strike, he thinks, things are going okay in the Wizarding world. At this point, Harry hears a loud crack and leaps to his feet, taking out his wand. He hits his head on the open window, making Petunia scream.

As Harry tries to find the source of the noise, Vernon leans out the window and grabs Harry around the neck. He hisses for Harry to put his wand away and lets Harry go with a yelp as Harry's head throbs. Vernon greets the curious neighbors and then accuses Harry of making noise and "lurking." They don't believe that Harry wants to hear the news, since Harry is receiving news from owls. Harry truthfully says he's not getting news from the owls, and when Petunia and Vernon say they're not stupid, Harry snaps, calls them stupid, and walks away. He thinks that the cracking sound he heard was someone Apparating or Disapparating, but wonders if he's overreacting to an ordinary noise out of a desire to have contact with the Wizarding world.

Harry thinks that in the morning, he'll get the *Daily Prophet*—but he no longer even reads it, as news of Voldemort would make the front page. He might receive letters from Ron and Hermione, but they can't give him details about anything. Harry angrily threw away their birthday presents because of this. He spends much of his time fuming that he's stuck in Privet Drive when he was the one who saw Cedric murdered and Voldemort return. Harry thinks that Sirius is the only one who seems to understand how he's feeling, but Sirius doesn't give him any news either.

As Harry makes his way to the playground, he congratulates himself for behaving—he hasn't struck out for the Weasleys' home yet. He feels he has nothing to look forward to. When he doesn't dream of Cedric dying, he dreams of dark corridors with locked doors. Harry's anger rises again, and he rages to himself that if it weren't for him, nobody would know that Voldemort is back.

Readers familiar with the series will know that only a month before this, Harry witnessed Voldemort's return and one of his classmates murdered. It's telling, then, that he's working so hard to get Muggle news, as it suggests that Harry is cut off from the Wizarding world and is reduced to lying in flowerbeds in the hope that if anything bad happens, it'll be bad enough to make the Muggle news. The fact that he hits his head also emphasizes that he's grown taller.



Notice that Harry is already beginning to question his reality (when he wonders if what he knows is the sound of Apparation is actually something else). Importantly, he wonders this because of his sense of estrangement from the Wizarding world. This kind of isolation leads Harry to doubt his own lived experience, without anyone else to confirm and support him.



Harry believes that Voldemort's return to power will mean that things will start going wrong in big, noticeable ways. The novel will later show that this is a product of Harry's youth; he doesn't yet understand that war can be conducted quietly and under the noses of one's enemy, and Voldemort is taking advantage of the fact that hardly anyone believes he's returned.



Again, Harry's anger here can be attributed to the fact that he's been alone in the Muggle world with no meaningful interaction with Wizards for a month. After the trauma he experienced in the previous book, Harry's poor emotional state is understandable and shows that he needs connection in order to start to recover.



When it starts to get dark, Harry looks up and sees Dudley and his gang walking by, singing a crude song. In the last year, Dudley has gone from obese to a massive but fit boxer. Harry hopes that Dudley's friends will see him and come to torment him, as Dudley is terrified to pester Harry, but the boys don't see him. After they turn the corner, Harry gets up to follow Dudley home. Harry waits in a shadow and listens to Dudley's friends talking about beating up a kid and then runs up behind Dudley after the group separates. Harry walks with him and brightly taunts Dudley about his weight and intellect. Dudley fires back that Harry isn't brave at night and teases Harry about his "boyfriend," Cedric.

Fuming, Harry points his wand at Dudley and backs him up against a wall. Suddenly, Dudley shudders and gasps, and it becomes dark and very cold. Harry snaps at Dudley to be quiet—he hears dementors in the alley. Dudley punches Harry out of fear and runs toward the dementors. Harry finds his wand, lights it, and sees a dementor leaning over Dudley. Harry conjures his Patronus, and the giant silver stag chases down the two dementors. The dementors fly away, the night returns to normal, and Mrs. Figg, the Dursleys' crazy old neighbor, races toward the boys. She shrieks for Harry to keep his wand out and says that she's going to kill Mundungus Fletcher.

CHAPTER TWO

Harry is shocked, and stares at Mrs. Figg as she raves that Mundungus left to check on stolen cauldrons, leaving her, a Squib (a non-magical person born to magical parents) to protect Harry. She wonders what Dumbledore is going to say and tries to get Dudley to get up. Harry lifts Dudley and Mrs. Figg leads the way to the Dursleys'. Harry asks why Mrs. Figg never told him that she was a Squib. She points out that if the Dursleys knew Harry liked visiting her, they wouldn't have let him visit. Mrs. Figg worries about how to tell Dumbledore what happened and tries to impress upon Harry how important it is that he know immediately.

With a crack, Mundungus Fletcher Apparates in front of Harry and Mrs. Figg. He stinks of alcohol and tobacco and is aghast to learn what happened. Mrs. Figg hits him in the head with her shopping bag full of cat food and sends him to tell Dumbledore. As they reach the Dursleys' walk, Harry asks Mrs. Figg to confirm that Dumbledore is having people follow him. She does and then leaves him on the front porch. Harry rings the bell, Petunia opens the door, and Dudley promptly vomits. Petunia and Vernon help Dudley inside while Harry attempts to slip up the stairs unnoticed. When Vernon asks who hurt Dudley, however, he says "him" and points at Harry. Harry insists that he didn't do anything as an owl swoops through the kitchen window. Vernon angrily closes the window.

Dudley's homophobic taunt about Cedric being Harry's boyfriend suggests that even being at Privet Drive with his aunt, uncle, and cousin is something of a traumatic experience for Harry, especially given that Vernon also tried to strangle Harry for surprising him. This is, again, made worse by the fact that Harry doesn't feel he can talk to these people, which means that he's experiencing more abuse on top of more silence.



Harry's ability to save himself and Dudley from the dementors speaks to the effectiveness of the educational experiences he's already had. This offers an example of what's "right" in terms of Wizarding education from previous years at Hogwarts. It's also telling that Harry saves Dudley despite their fight and Dudley's cruelty. Harry dislikes Dudley, but he still values his life and automatically moves to save him when he's in danger.



Learning that Mundungus was watching Harry and left confirms for Harry that the noise he heard was Apparation; now, he knows he's not hearing things or making things up. However, keep in mind that Harry had no idea that people were following him. This makes Harry feel even more like he's being left in the dark and not communicated with. This is also a surprise revelation about Mrs. Figg, whom Harry always disliked and never considered she could possibly know about the Wizarding world.



Given Harry and Dumbledore's previously close relationship, it's likely even more difficult for Harry to stomach that Dumbledore is ignoring him and having people secretly follow him than it'd be if anyone else did this. This speaks to the power and the strength of Harry's relationships with people other than the Dursleys. In light of their abuse, Harry has to turn elsewhere to get any sense of comfort, care, and guidance—especially given how unconcerned about Harry Vernon is here.



The letter is to Harry, expelling him from Hogwarts for performing the Patronus Charm. Harry decides he has to run away, since he'll never make it in the world without his wand and the Ministry will arrive soon to destroy it. As Harry tries to leave, he snaps at Vernon that he's expelled. Suddenly another owl hits the window and Harry takes its letter. It's from Mr. Weasley, telling Harry that Dumbledore is working on things and for Harry to stay at the Dursleys' house, not do magic, and not surrender his wand. Harry feels panicky but sits down and explains to Vernon who sent the owls.

Dudley mumbles that Harry pointed his wand at him, things went dark, and then he started hearing things. He's unable to continue, except to say that he fell and felt cold and unhappy. Harry explains to Vernon that a dementor attacked Dudley, and Petunia adds that dementors protect Azkaban, the wizard prison. Both Harry and Vernon stare at her in shock, but Petunia saying this seems to convince Vernon that dementors are real. Another owl zooms through the window and Harry opens its letter, which tells Harry that his expulsion will be decided at a hearing in August.

Harry tries to leave the kitchen, but Vernon insists that Harry explain what happened to Dudley. Harry patiently explains that dementors suck out people's souls, that you can't punch a dementor, and that he used the Patronus charm to get rid of them. A third owl, bearing a note from Sirius, flies in. The note says that Harry should stay put, which makes Harry extremely angry—he feels someone should praise him for fighting off two dementors by himself. Returning to his conversation with Vernon, Harry says he has no idea why the dementors were in the alley and he wonders out loud if they've joined Voldemort. Harry explains that Voldemort is back, and Petunia seems to comprehend the gravity of this. Harry is, for the first time, happy that she's his aunt.

Vernon decides that with Voldemort back and dementors coming after Harry, Harry has to leave the house. Harry freezes; all his letters told him not to leave. As Vernon rages at Harry, another owl drops a red, smoking envelope—a Howler—in front of Petunia. It's addressed to her. After a moment, it bursts into flames, and a horrible voice says, "remember my last, Petunia." Petunia is silent and then says that Harry will stay. She briskly sends Harry to his room and refuses to answer Harry or Vernon's questions.

Notice the difference in how Harry responds to news that Dumbledore and Mr. Weasley are looking out for him in comparison to how he speaks to Vernon. Again, this illustrates how neglected Harry is at the Dursleys' home, and how much Harry relies on and trusts the adults who care for him in the Wizarding world. This scene also shows Harry's tendency to be impulsive and reckless, as he immediately considers throwing his life away and going on the run.



The fact that Petunia knows what dementors are and what Azkaban is suggests that though she does what she can to pretend that the Wizarding world doesn't exist, she has a relationship to it that's much closer than Harry thought it was. This opens it up for Petunia to become more of an ally to Harry if she were to choose to become one, as she at least has some insight into how his world functions.



Here, even though Petunia isn't kind to Harry and doesn't parent him effectively in any way, she's the only person who's able to make Harry feel heard. Harry's sense of relief at telling Petunia and having her believe him shows that it's cathartic to tell one's story—even if it's just the bare bones—and have someone else believe it. This suggests that being believed and being listened to is one of the most effective ways to heal and feel closer to others.



The Howler tells Harry and the reader that Petunia definitely has contact with someone in the Wizarding world—and that person has the power to dictate how and if she keeps Harry. Petunia keeps the sender of the Howler secret, though, attempting to maintain composure and a sense of power. Note also how little Vernon truly cares for his nephew—he's willing to throw him out of the house and directly into danger.



CHAPTER THREE

Harry writes three versions of the same note asking for information to send to Hermione, Ron, and Sirius. Hedwig is hunting, so Harry paces and resents everyone for not telling him what's going on. When Hedwig flies in, Harry gruffly tells her to not come back until his friends have written long replies. Harry figures they'll write back promptly, as nobody can ignore a dementor attack. Hedwig doesn't return, however, and Harry stays in his bedroom for three days. He alternates between restlessness, dread, and lethargy, and he wonders if he can live with Sirius if the Ministry expels him.

On the fourth night, Vernon enters Harry's room, dressed in his best suit, and explains that the family (minus Harry) is going out. Harry doesn't care. A bit later, he hears a crash in the kitchen and gets up to investigate. His door unlocks itself and, wand in hand, Harry starts to creep down the stairs. He sees almost a dozen people and hears Mad-Eye Moody tell him to put his wand away and come down. Harry is suspicious until he hears Remus Lupin. The other witches and wizards say that Harry looks like his father, except he has his mother's eyes. Lupin introduces Harry to the wizards and explains that they're taking him to a secret location.

Harry tries to ask about Voldemort, but Moody insists they can't discuss anything here. He pops out his magical eye, which he says has been sticking since "that scum" wore it, and asks for a glass of water. Moody tosses his eye in, makes it spin, and sends a witch named Tonks to help Harry pack. As Harry throws things in his trunk, Tonks decides she doesn't like her purple hair and it changes to hot pink. She explains that she's a Metamorphmagus, which means she can change her appearance at will. It makes her a great Auror, though she's clumsy and not good at household spells. Tonks makes Harry's belongings fly into his trunk, cleans Hedwig's cage, and levitates his trunk down the stairs.

Harry's confusion at this point is intense. Nobody will tell him what's going on, and he's being punished for saving his own life. When everyone else ignores him, it gives him time to dwell on this, become even angrier, and feel increasingly isolated from his world and his friends. His hope of being able to live with Sirius reminds the reader that even if Petunia is maybe on the right side here, living at the Dursleys' home long-term is still untenable for Harry.



When the witches and wizards take care to verbally situate Harry as looking like his parents, it allows Harry to feel connected to family that he loves and misses, as well as to the world his parents inhabited. As another mentor figure, Lupin is able to make Harry feel comfortable and trust that he's in good hands. This reminds Harry that he does have people to look to for help when he needs it, and they'll always come for him.



Tonks introduces Harry to a real Auror who's young and extremely relatable: unlike Moody, who's eccentric but seems to be good at everything, Tonks admits that she struggles with some things. This helps Harry to start to understand that as he grows up, he can be a multifaceted adult in the world—the fact that he's a poor student in Potions and Divination isn't necessarily going to matter or hold him back once he's grown. Here Moody also references the previous book, in which a Death Eater impersonated him and wore his magical eye.



In the kitchen, Lupin seals an envelope to leave for the Dursleys. Moody puts a Disillusionment Charm on Harry, which makes his body like a chameleon, changing colors to match its background so that he's almost invisible. Everyone steps outside with broomsticks and Moody gives instructions. He tells Harry that there's a rear guard in case they die, but Kingsley Shacklebolt assures Harry that nobody will die. They all take off on their brooms. Harry is thrilled to be flying, but he soon becomes cold and numb with the altitude. Finally, they dismount in a small, poorly kept square surrounded by grubby houses. Using a magical device borrowed from Dumbledore, Moody captures the lights from the streetlamps, making the street dark, and gives Harry a piece of parchment to read and memorize. It says that the headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix are at number twelve, Grimmauld Place.

Kingsley's calming nature continues to show Harry that adults in the Wizarding world are endlessly varied and in the case of Kingsley, have skills (in this case, interpersonal communication skills) that aren't necessarily magical, but still can make life easier and more pleasant. To this end, while Moody is clearly good at planning Harry's journey from Privet Drive to Grimmauld Place and planning for the worst, he's comically horrendous at making Harry feel like this is a safe operation. The device Moody uses to put out the streetlights calls back to the first scene of the very first book, when Dumbledore arrived at Privet Drive to drop off the baby Harry.



CHAPTER FOUR

Moody silences Harry when Harry tries to ask what the Order of the Phoenix is. When Lupin tells Harry to think about what he just read, a house suddenly seems to inflate out of thin air, wedged between two others. Lupin taps the door with his wand and it creaks open. Quietly, Harry and the others step inside. Moody lifts the Disillusionment Charm and Harry feels unsettled by the gloomy and dirty entryway. Mrs. Weasley emerges, hugs Harry, and sends Harry upstairs to find Ron and Hermione until the "meeting" is over. She tells him to be quiet so that he doesn't "wake anything up," and leads him up the stairs.

The way that Mrs. Weasley speaks about the house implies that there's something funny about it, and it could be dangerous. Again, when nobody will answer Harry's questions and especially when they send him away from the meeting, they tell Harry through these actions that he's too young to participate or know too much, and his job is to not provoke the house. In all this is a disorienting experience, and nothing like he was expecting.



When Harry opens the door, Hermione throws herself at him hugs him, apologizing for her "useless" letters. She says that Dumbledore made them promise not to say anything. Hedwig swoops down onto Harry's shoulder, and Ron and Hermione show Harry their pecked hands, as Hedwig had obeyed Harry's order to make sure his friends wrote long replies. Growing suddenly moody, Harry doesn't feel sorry about their injuries. As they talk more, he realizes that his friends knew that people were following him, and tries to stay calm. He asks why Dumbledore didn't tell him anything, and as Ron and Hermione try to explain, Harry starts shouting angrily about his awful summer and his feelings of being neglected while Ron and Hermione got to be in the middle of the action.

Notice that while Harry is perfectly justified in being angry with Ron and Hermione, he's also upset because he believes that they're getting to do exciting things by living at the headquarters of the resistance movement. Harry will soon learn that this couldn't be further from the truth; as young people who can't join the resistance, living here is rather gloomy and boring. Harry's conceptualization of the resistance as constantly exciting illustrates his youth and his preconceptions about what war is really like.



Harry finally takes a breath and asks what the Order of the Phoenix is. Hastily, Hermione and Ron say that it's the resistance group. She says that thanks to Fred and George's newly invented Extendable Ears, they know that some members are recruiting people, keeping tabs on Death Eaters, and guarding Harry. They explain too that they've been decontaminating the house. Suddenly, Fred and George Apparate into the bedroom and tease Harry about shouting. They note that his shouts are making it difficult to use their Extendable Ears and are crestfallen when Ginny enters and says that they can't use the Ears anyway: Mrs. Weasley put an Imperturbable Charm on the door. Fred and George sigh that they wanted to hear what Snape's been up to.

Fred, George, and Ginny explain that Bill now has a desk job in London so he can work for the Order and give private English lessons to Fleur Delacour, and Charlie is still in Romania trying to bring foreign wizards into the Order. Harry asks about Percy, and all the Weasleys' faces become dark and angry. They explain that Percy was promoted to a position in Fudge's office a week after term ended last year. Mr. Weasley knew that Fudge likely promoted Percy so he could spy on the Weasleys, who are close to Dumbledore and therefore are Fudge's enemies. After this accusation, Percy declared his loyalty to the Ministry, disowned his family, and moved to London.

Harry says that Percy has to be aware that Voldemort is back, but Ron explains that Percy doesn't think Harry is trustworthy and he believes the *Daily Prophet*. Harry has no idea what this means, but Hermione explains that if he were to read the paper cover to cover, he'd see that the *Prophet* slips Harry in as a standing joke every time they print something that sounds far-fetched. They are trying to discredit him and thus maintain that he is lying about having seen Voldemort return. Harry is furious.

The children hear steps on the stairs, so Fred and George Apparate away. Mrs. Weasley calls everyone for dinner. Ron and Hermione apologize to Harry for not telling him more. Then, Hermione and Ron tell Harry about Kreacher, the house-elf who lives at Grimmauld Place and who is, according to Ron, crazy. The trio stops when they see a crowd in the hallway, including Snape. Fred and George try to lower an Extendable Ear, but the group moves away. After Tonks and Lupin lock the door behind everyone, Tonks knocks over an umbrella stand and velvet curtains fly open to reveal a painting of a woman. The woman screams about "half-breeds, mutants, and freaks" and the other portraits join in. Sirius Black appears, and he and Lupin close the curtains. Sirius explains that the portrait is of his mother, Mrs. Black.

Everything that Ron and Hermione tell Harry about the Order of the Phoenix and, specifically, what they've been doing suggests that almost nothing the Order does right is especially exciting. Notice, however, that what's exciting is acquiring information (in this case, about what Snape's doing). Though all the children dedicate themselves to finding out as much as possible and view acquiring information as an important task, note how Harry thinks of information acquisition at this point—it never occurs to him that the adult members of the Order are doing the exact same thing in their work.



Along with Vernon and Petunia, Percy shows here that blood relationships aren't a guarantee that someone will behave loyally to their family members. Percy also illustrates the novel's later assertion that the world isn't split up into people who are entirely good or entirely evil. Though Percy isn't a bad guy, he's still making choices that align him with people making even worse decisions—which in turn, leaves him vulnerable to manipulation by Voldemort.



The way that Fudge and the *Daily Prophet* are going about discrediting Harry also makes his experience of trauma worse. Refusing to admit that Voldemort is back means that Harry has to deal with the compounded trauma of constantly defending his lived experience (which itself haunts him) to very powerful people.



Mrs. Black's portrait is presumably what Mrs. Weasley didn't want Harry to wake up, and the content of her screams and shrieks suggest that the house itself isn't supportive of the aims of the Order of the Phoenix—Mrs. Black seems to want a pure-blooded, entirely human world. The fact that this sentiment seems to be part of the house speaks to how insidiously these beliefs in wizard superiority and a fear of difference can be ingrained in people—in this case, it's part of the architecture, just as racist or discriminatory legislation can make the architecture of a society racist.



CHAPTER FIVE

Sirius tells Harry that Mrs. Black must've put a Permanent Sticking Charm on the back of her portrait, so they can't take it down. He says that this was his parents' house. They enter the basement kitchen, which is gloomy and littered with chairs and empty wine bottles in the aftermath of the Order's meeting. Mr. Weasley and Bill greet Harry as Bill rolls up parchment that seems to contain floor plans of a building. When she sees Harry looking, Mrs. Weasley snaps that they need to clean up immediately after meetings. Sirius introduces Harry to Mundungus, who begins to awkwardly apologize.

Everyone but Sirius, Mundungus, and Harry help Mrs. Weasley prepare dinner. At the table, Sirius tells Harry that Harry's summer sounds delightful, as he's been stuck inside for the last month. Sirius sounds just as upset with Dumbledore as Harry is. He says that Snape keeps making snide comments about Sirius spending time safely at home, cleaning. Suddenly, Mrs. Weasley shrieks and Harry sees most of dinner, complete with a knife, flying toward the table. The knife lands right where Sirius's hand just was and Mrs. Weasley screams at Fred and George, who are responsible for this, while Harry and Sirius laugh.

Over dinner, Mrs. Weasley mentions to Sirius that there's a boggart trapped in the drawing room and doxies in the curtains, both of which she'd like to tackle tomorrow. Mr. Weasley, Bill, and Lupin discuss whether the goblins might join Voldemort. Mundungus, meanwhile, tells Fred, George, and Ron about selling someone their own stolen toads, which offends Mrs. Weasley. Sirius tells Harry that Mundungus is a useful person to have around, as he knows all the criminals and is loyal to Dumbledore.

After dessert, Mrs. Weasley tries to send everyone to bed, but Sirius suggests they speak to Harry and let him ask some questions. Sirius and Mrs. Weasley argue; Sirius believes Harry has a right to know things, but Mrs. Weasley thinks Harry is too young. She points out that Harry isn't James and tells Sirius that he can't treat Harry like James. Mr. Weasley and Lupin quietly suggest that they fill Harry in, if only so he doesn't get partial facts from others. Lupin says that Harry's old enough to decide if he wants to know or not. Harry feels bad for going against Mrs. Weasley, but he says he wants to know. Mrs. Weasley then tries to send everyone else to bed, but only successfully sends Ginny to bed.

It's presented as a surprise that this is Sirius's childhood home, since it seems like such a gloomy and even evil place. The floor plans are a motif that show up often in heist or action films, and used here, they likely signal to Harry that the Order is doing something exciting and meaningful with them. Mrs. Weasley's anger that Harry saw them suggests that she believes it's extremely important to censor what information Harry gets and keep him in the dark, likely believing it safer to do so.



Remember that Fred and George are now adults in Wizarding society, which is why they can Apparate and do magic like this outside of school. Just as with Tonks's admittance that she's not good at some things, the way the twins are seemingly struggling to ascertain how to appropriately behave as adults in the Wizarding world suggests that there's a learning curve as wizards come of age. The twins are also just characteristically reckless and willing to take risks for the sake of a joke.



The existence of the boggart shows the reader that what Harry's learning in school is actually useful for the real world (Harry's class learned to do away with boggarts in their third year). That lesson was a practical one, which suggests that there's value in actually practicing magic, something that will become important later.



Remember that James and Sirius were best friends in school. Mrs. Weasley's admonition then suggests that Harry and Sirius's relationship is (at least on Sirius's end) becoming more of one between peers than a guardian and a minor child. The series positions the friendships between Harry, Ron, and Hermione as more important than anything else, however, which suggests that the relationship between Sirius and Harry will now be equally important. At the same time, Mrs. Weasley clearly worries that Sirius is trying to relive his youth through Harry, subconsciously pretending that Harry really is James, Sirius's brave and reckless best friend.



Sirius and Lupin explain that Voldemort is laying low and isn't killing people, and Harry managed to thwart Voldemort's first plans by immediately alerting Dumbledore of his return. The Order has mostly been trying to convince people that Voldemort is back, but they're struggling since Fudge refuses to believe the truth. Mr. Weasley explains that Fudge is afraid of Dumbledore because he believes that Dumbledore wants to be Minister of Magic, so he's trying to discredit Dumbledore and Harry. This makes laypeople easy targets for the Death Eaters, since nobody *wants* to believe Voldemort's back.

Harry asks what else Voldemort is after, and Sirius cagily says that it's something Voldemort "can only get by stealth," like a weapon. Harry latches onto this and asks what the weapon is like, but Mrs. Weasley enters the kitchen and insists that this is enough. Lupin agrees with her and slowly, everyone stands up and heads upstairs.

CHAPTER SIX

Mrs. Weasley ushers Harry, Ron, and Hermione upstairs. Harry and Ron climb into bed and Ron bolts the door so Kreacher doesn't wander in. They begin to talk about what they heard when Fred and George Apparate onto Ron's bed. They all discuss what the "weapon" might be and whether Dumbledore might have it hidden at Hogwarts. They wonder if it can cause pain or kill lots of people. Fred and George Disapparate when they hear Mrs. Weasley coming.

Harry dreams of creatures and weapons all night and wakes up to George saying to eat breakfast quickly so they can deal with the doxies in the house. A half-hour later, Harry and Ron join Mrs. Weasley, Hermione, Fred, George, and Ginny. They tie cloths over their noses and mouths and pick up bottles of Doxycide. Mrs. Weasley wonders out loud what Kreacher's been up to since the house is such a mess, which offends Hermione, but Sirius appears and insists that Kreacher is more than capable of keeping the house clean if he wanted to. Someone rings the doorbell downstairs and Sirius runs down to stop Mrs. Black's screams (she's awakened by the sound). Harry takes as much time as possible closing the door and hears Kingsley say that he's come to leave a report for Dumbledore.

The way that Mr. Weasley connects a lack of information with vulnerability makes the case that holding information can mean power and safety. Fudge's choices here, and specifically his distrust of Dumbledore suggest that Harry can expect some changes at Hogwarts, especially given how much free rein Dumbledore has had thus far to conduct school business as he pleases.



Harry latches onto the word "weapon" and seems less interested in the grunt work of quietly spreading the word of Voldemort's return. This again shows that he expects the Order to be guarding something important and exciting.



The fact that all of Harry's peers also fixate on the "weapon" as a weapon in the conventional sense, like a gun or a violent curse, suggests that thinking this way is something typical to the youth of the novel. They don't wonder if it's something like information, which can also be useful but isn't as flashy.



Notice that though Mrs. Weasley is a good person—she's kind, she's the closest thing Harry has to a mother, and she fights against Voldemort—she still isn't perfect, given that she speaks somewhat callously about Kreacher. As a house-elf, Kreacher doesn't have the best lot in life and is deserving of kindness and respect. This shows that this kind of discriminatory language and thought against house-elves is something ingrained in Wizarding society.



Mrs. Weasley explains that they'll all spray at the curtains, which will paralyze the doxies, and then they'll throw them in buckets. Harry notices Fred pocket a doxy and George whispers that they want to experiment with their venom for their Skiving Snackboxes, a product they're developing involving double-ended sweets. One end makes a person ill enough to get out of class, while the other end instantly restores them to wellness. The twins explain that they're currently running their business, Weasley's Wizard Wheezes, as a mail-order service out of the *Daily Prophet*.

When the curtains finally stop buzzing with doxies, someone rings the doorbell. Mrs. Weasley runs downstairs to deal with Mrs. Black as the children look outside and see Mundungus with a stack of cauldrons. They figure he wants to hide them at Grimmauld Place, and this is confirmed when Mrs. Weasley starts yelling that Mundungus can't store stolen goods here. George starts to shut the door but the house-elf Kreacher slides into the room first. Kreacher ignores everyone and mutters to himself about how Mundungus and everyone else are destroying his mistress's house. He also calls Hermione a "Mudblood." When Sirius steps into the room, Kreacher insists that he's cleaning.

Sirius accuses Kreacher of trying to sneak things away so Sirius can't throw them out and sends Kreacher out of the room. Hermione suggests that they set Kreacher free, but Sirius curtly says that Kreacher knows too much. They approach the tapestry of the Black family tree that Kreacher was eyeing. Sirius points to where he used to be; Mrs. Black burned him off when he ran away from home at age sixteen. Sirius then points to his brother, Regulus, who died fifteen years ago. Sirius explains that Regulus joined the Death Eaters and their parents were thrilled, though they weren't Death Eaters themselves. They thought Voldemort had the right idea about blood purity.

Mrs. Weasley returns with a plate of sandwiches, but Harry stays with Sirius at the tapestry. Sirius remarks that Tonks isn't on the family tree anymore, either, as her mother married a Muggle. Tonks's aunts are Bellatrix Lestrange and Narcissa Malfoy, which shocks Harry, but Sirius explains that all pure-blood families are related. He says he's even related to the Weasleys. Harry is stunned that Sirius and Bellatrix are related, but Sirius snaps that she's not really family. He apologizes and says he never thought he'd be stuck in this house again, a sentiment that Harry understands. Sirius then suggests that he accompany Harry to his hearing in his dog form, but remembering the hearing makes Harry's mood plummet again.

Readers will recall doxies from previous books when the children learned about them at Hogwarts. The twins again show their great ingenuity, despite the fact that they're not successful at traditional academics.



The way that Kreacher speaks about Hermione and Mundungus indicates that he bought into Mrs. Black's view of the world entirely, even as it dehumanizes him and denies him any power or agency. This reminds the reader that even among individuals like Kreacher who are harmed by discriminatory policies or regimes, there can still be impetus to go along with or support those regimes.



The political leanings of Sirius's parents show again that one doesn't need to actually be a Death Eater to have a questionable moral compass. While Mrs. Black seemed to put a lot of stock in having the family tree written out and burning people out of it when they disappointed her, that clearly didn't work when it came to allocating things after her death—Sirius still got her house. Erasing someone from a family tree doesn't mean they're not family, with the rights and responsibilities that go along with that.



Just as erasing someone off the tree doesn't alter what family is in a legal sense, being on the tree doesn't mean that Sirius has to think of these people as family either. This suggests that one's actions are more important than blood, given that Sirius relies on his friends to give him the support that family might have shown him, as does Harry. Similarly, Tonks's mother was taken off the tree because she presumably married someone she loved, further supporting that love and actions are more important than blood.



Harry asks if he can come live with Sirius if he's expelled, but Sirius won't promise anything. For the rest of the afternoon, Mrs. Weasley and Sirius lead the effort to clear off shelves filled with magical objects. Several of the objects try to harm them, and Fred and George steal a few. They continue to clean for a number of days, and Harry and his friends have little luck listening in on conversations downstairs. Harry feels fine as long as he's busy, but in quiet moments, he fixates on the hearing. The night before his hearing, Mrs. Weasley explains that Mr. Weasley will take Harry to work with him. Harry is hurt to learn that Dumbledore was at Grimmauld Place the night before and didn't bother to speak to Harry.

When Harry's life turns into cleaning and decontaminating the house, it impresses upon him that the kind of war the Order of the Phoenix is waging is mostly pretty boring—and though Harry might not realize it, the work he's doing is what allows the Order to get on with its other work that tackles Voldemort directly. This reinforces the importance of domestic labor to resistance efforts like this and shows that those efforts cannot exist without all the people who feed, clean, and otherwise support the lives of the members.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Harry wakes up very early the next morning, dresses quickly, and goes to the kitchen. Mrs. Weasley tries to give Harry breakfast, but Harry is nervous and can barely eat. The adults discuss Order business and try to assure Harry that things will be okay. The woman conducting Harry's hearing, Amelia Bones, is fair, according to Mr. Weasley. Everyone wishes Harry luck as he and Mr. Weasley leave the house. They take the Underground into the middle of London so they can use the visitor's entrance, which is a phone box. Mr. Weasley dials a number and announces who he is. A machine deposits a badge saying that Harry's at the Ministry for a disciplinary hearing, and he pins it to his shirt.

Recall that in previous novels, Harry hasn't been given good reason to trust the Wizarding world's justice system. Mr. Weasley is likely being optimistic to ease Harry's nerves, then, especially given that he now knows that Sirius is innocent and of the Ministry's vendetta against Harry. It's likely that Harry's hearing is a tool to try to discredit him, and in the process will make him relive his trauma yet again.



The box begins to lower into the ground and Harry's mouth falls open at what he sees. The atrium is long, splendid, and lined with fireplaces for employees traveling by Floo powder. There's a fountain with gold statues of a witch, wizard, centaur, goblin, and house-elf in the middle. Harry reads the sign that says money in the [Fountain of Magical Brethren](#) goes to St. Mungo's Hospital, and Harry vows to put money in if he doesn't get expelled. A security wizard checks Harry's wand and then Harry follows Mr. Weasley into an elevator.

Notice how at this point, when Harry is extremely concerned with himself and his future, he doesn't question the implications of the fountain at all (Harry will note later that it seems questionable and idealistic at best). This illustrates how a person must be able to look beyond themselves in order to identify the problems with one's society, which the fountain represents.



Mr. Weasley stops in at the Aurors' office to speak to Kingsley. Harry is shocked that the men speak to each other as if they barely know each other, but Kingsley gives Harry a wink as he gives Mr. Weasley a magazine for Sirius. Harry and Mr. Weasley head for Mr. Weasley's office. Mr. Weasley opens a memo about regurgitating toilets and explains that anti-Muggle pranksters are responsible. Perkins, Mr. Weasley's coworker, arrives and says that they changed Harry's hearing time. It's now in Courtroom Ten and started five minutes ago.

Changing Harry's hearing time and not notifying him makes it very clear that the Wizarding justice system isn't in this to serve Harry and give him a fair trial. At the very least, being late to his hearing will put Harry in a position where he looks bad and has to defend himself and his ability to act responsibly from the start. Mr. Weasley and Kingsley must act like they don't know each other, as they're essentially undermining the Ministry together at this point.



Mr. Weasley leads Harry away at a run back to the elevators. Mr. Weasley greets a man named Bode in the elevator and they all get off at the Department of Mysteries. Harry and Mr. Weasley take the stairs down to the lowest floor, find the courtroom, and Mr. Weasley shoves Harry inside.

The Department of Mysteries will become important later in the novel. Learning that it exists at all and where it exists at this point is an early clue that Harry at first doesn't recognize as useful information.



CHAPTER EIGHT

Harry gasps. The courtroom is the same one he saw in Dumbledore's Pensieve last year, and it's filled with about fifty people. A man tells Harry he's late and that it's Harry's fault for not getting the memo as Harry takes his seat. Harry looks around and sees Fudge with a woman he suspects is Amelia Bones and another woman in shadow on his other side. Percy is there to take notes and acts like he doesn't recognize Harry. Fudge begins the hearing just as Dumbledore walks into the room, saying that he's a witness for Harry. Harry feels hopeful and tries to catch Dumbledore's eye, but Dumbledore stares at Fudge.

Notice how badly Harry wants Dumbledore to acknowledge him—Harry wants to feel as though Dumbledore is actually on his side, and Dumbledore's odd choice to ignore Harry makes Harry feel alone, despite the fact that Dumbledore has clearly come to his defense. At the same time, however, Harry understands that Fudge can't steamroller him as effectively with Dumbledore there, which shows that Harry still trusts Dumbledore and expects him to take care of things. With the armchair, Dumbledore makes the very serious affair of the trial seem ridiculous—and it is, given that Fudge has called the same assembly that usually judges Death Eaters to judge the trivial crime of an underage student using magic.



Dumbledore conjures himself a chintz armchair as Fudge starts to read Harry's crime. Fudge looks flustered but begins to question Harry. He only allows Harry to answer yes or no to questions, though Amelia Bones cuts in to confirm that Harry can conjure a true Patronus. She's impressed. Harry says he did it because of the dementors, which makes the people in the courtroom go silent. This piques Amelia Bones's interest and she seems to take seriously the fact that dementors were in a Muggle town, but Fudge says that Harry's lying. Dumbledore cuts in that he brought a witness. Percy shows Mrs. Figg into the courtroom.

Remember in the previous novel that Dumbledore suggested that the dementors would abandon the Ministry and join Voldemort. This is likely why Fudge refuses to believe that the dementors could be out of his control, as that would mean accepting that Dumbledore was right. In doing so, Fudge shows that he prioritizes keeping his own power over keeping everyone else in the world—not just the Wizarding world—safe.



Mrs. Figg says she's a Squib, and when Fudge asks with derision if Squibs can see dementors, she indignantly insists they can. She gives her version of the story and though she describes the dementors' appearance poorly, she perfectly describes the way dementors make a person feel cold and hopeless. Fudge dismisses Mrs. Figg and declares she wasn't a convincing witness. Amelia Bones is still concerned that there are rogue dementors, but Dumbledore calmly says that someone ordered the dementors there. The witch next to Fudge, introduced as Dolores Umbridge, leans forward and asks Dumbledore to confirm if he's implying that the Ministry ordered an attack on Harry. When Dumbledore does, Fudge turns bright red.

The way that Fudge treats Mrs. Figg, both in front of her and when she's gone, suggests that Fudge believes in a hierarchy of people, just like Voldemort and Sirius's family do. Again, this reminds the reader that someone doesn't need to actually be Voldemort's follower in order to hold views that are cruel and discriminatory. Dumbledore's choice to pick at Fudge and the Ministry shows that he's using the hearing to make his points to Fudge again, in an arena where he must be allowed to make them and be heard by others. This scene also introduces Umbridge, who becomes this book's main antagonist other than Voldemort himself.



Fudge tries to return the subject to Harry's use of underage magic, and Dumbledore points out that according to the law, Harry was allowed to use magic to defend himself. Fudge loses his temper and says that Harry has a habit of using magic outside of school and getting into trouble in school, but Dumbledore reminds Fudge that Fudge can't expel students. Dumbledore suggests that Fudge is being unreasonable and asks him to come to a verdict. Amelia Bones calls a vote and Harry is thrilled to see that more than half vote to clear him. Fudge dismisses the courtroom and Dumbledore leaves without looking at or greeting Harry.

The way that Dumbledore is able to use the law to his advantage to clear Harry shows that with the right person in charge of the law, it can do what it's supposed to do and protect vulnerable people. Fudge, however, shows how easy it is for someone to abuse that power and remove people from society that oppose him via the court system. Again, Dumbledore's refusal to look at Harry is presented as a mystery, though to Harry it mostly feels frustrating and isolating.



CHAPTER NINE

Harry stays in his chair, stunned by Dumbledore's departure and his good fortune. He tries to catch the eye of Fudge or Amelia Bones, but slips out when neither looks at him. Mr. Weasley congratulates Harry as the witches and wizards file out. A few greet Mr. Weasley, but Fudge and Percy don't. Mr. Weasley tells Harry about the regurgitating toilet and says that while the fix is simple, the anti-Muggle attitude is the real problem. On the next floor, Mr. Weasley stops short when he sees Fudge speaking to Lucius Malfoy. Harry is shocked, since he told Fudge that Mr. Malfoy was a Death Eater a month ago.

The emotional highs and lows of this experience speak to how unmoored and alone Harry feels, especially since his lows all have to do with being ignored by Dumbledore and with being disbelieved by Fudge. Again, this suggests that Harry will only be able to truly heal and feel safe once more people are willing to listen to him and accept that he's telling the truth.



Lucius Malfoy rudely insults Harry and Mr. Weasley before he and Fudge walk away. Mr. Weasley angrily says that Lucius is likely here to talk about donations of some sort. In the elevator, he assures Harry that though Fudge is at risk of being put under the Imperius Curse, Dumbledore is certain that Fudge is acting by himself now. In the lobby, Harry stops by the [Fountain of Magical Brethren](#). He notices that the figures look very unrealistic; the centaur and goblin stare lovingly at the humans and the humans look silly. He dumps money in anyway.

The fact that known Death Eaters are still working openly at the Ministry is a bad sign for the Order, and shows how at this point the war between Voldemort and the Order is being fought behind the scenes, with influence and stealth rather than open fighting. Harry now feels compelled to pay his good fortune forward by helping someone else. Harry's also able to see now that the fountain represents a world where all creatures worship humans, which isn't the world Harry knows and lives in. Instead, the fountain shows Fudge's version of an idealized world.



Back at number twelve, Grimmauld Place, everyone celebrates Harry's win. Mr. Weasley passes on his message about seeing Lucius Malfoy to Sirius and heads off to the regurgitating toilet. Ron declares that Fudge couldn't convict Harry with Dumbledore there, and Harry feels ungrateful and childish when he silently wishes that Dumbledore had said something to him. At this thought, Harry's scar burns.

The fact that Harry believes he needs to be mature about Dumbledore's treatment and be grateful for his help shows that Harry already thinks that in order to be taken seriously as a young adult, he shouldn't ask for respect or acknowledgement. This is because Dumbledore is an authority figure, not a peer.



Sirius seems to be the only person who isn't thrilled that Harry will return to Hogwarts. He spends most of his time with Buckbeak. Hermione thinks that Sirius is being selfish and on some level, he hoped that Harry would be convicted so he'd have company. Mrs. Weasley pokes her head in to check on the trio's progress cleaning a moldy cupboard, and tells Ron that cleaning is the best way they can help the Order. When Ron says he feels like a house-elf, Hermione suggests they host a "sponsored scrub" of the Gryffindor common room to benefit her society S.P.E.W.: the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare. Harry daydreams of being back at Hogwarts, as being at the headquarters of the Order is boring and he hasn't learned anything new.

On the last day of the holidays, Ron gives Harry his booklist and Harry notes that they only need two new books, one of which is titled *Defensive Magical Theory*. Fred and George Apparate into the room and note that Dumbledore found a new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, given the assigned book. They say that they heard Dumbledore had trouble filling the position. Then they notice that Ron has a strange look on his face. Fred reads over Ron's shoulder and says in a hushed tone that Ron has been made a prefect. Fred and George say they thought Harry would surely be a prefect.

Without speaking, Ron holds his prefect badge out to Harry. Harry takes it just as Hermione races into the room, shouting that she's also a prefect. She's then awkwardly surprised that Ron is the one made a prefect, not Harry, but congratulates Ron. Mrs. Weasley lets herself into the room with laundry and says she'll take the booklists to Diagon Alley. She shrieks when Fred and George point out that Ron's a prefect and says that "everyone in the family" now has been a prefect, which makes the twins grumble. Mrs. Weasley asks Ron what he wants as a present and Ron hopefully asks for a new broom. Mrs. Weasley agrees, as long as it's not too expensive, and bustles away.

Fred and George tease Ron for a moment and Disapparate, cackling, when Hermione points out that Ron could put them in detention. Ron goes to tell Mrs. Weasley what broom he wants as Harry makes a point of not looking at Hermione. He congratulates her in a hearty voice and allows her to borrow Hedwig so she can tell her parents. After she leaves, Harry sits down and thinks that he never expected to be passed over for prefect. He thinks that he's not better than Ron, but a part of him still thinks he deserved the honor more than Ron did. Harry laughs when he remembers Fred saying that no sane person would make Ron a prefect, but then he feels awful immediately. He thinks he shouldn't ruin this for Ron, who is usually being outshone by Harry.

After a few weeks, Harry now understands that the resistance effort isn't especially exciting or daring. Instead, a major part of the resistance is making headquarters safe to live in so that other work can get done at all. Given Harry's youth, this speaks to his desire to have more interesting experiences that are more obviously directed at fighting Voldemort. This also means that when faced with seemingly mundane things that are nonetheless important, Harry is liable to underestimate them.



The title of the new Defense Against the Dark Arts textbook suggests that the focus this year will be on theory, not on actually performing magic. This is further evidence that Fudge is trying to control what Dumbledore does at Hogwarts, as every other teacher that has taught the class has included practical skills alongside the theory.



Mrs. Weasley's reaction and, specifically, the way she passes over Fred and George, reminds the reader that the Weasleys value education and doing well in school above almost everything else. However, remember too that the twins are doing well in life and seem well on their way to opening a joke shop despite being poor students. This suggests that Mrs. Weasley's version of success is narrow and doesn't account for differing interests or abilities.



Harry's choice to not ruin this for Ron shows that he understands that he has the power to help his friendships or harm them, depending on how he chooses to behave. This is a mature decision for Harry, especially to recognize that he is usually the one getting all the attention and honor. He decides to let Ron have this achievement for himself and enjoy it as he deserves, despite his initial reaction of jealousy and disappointment.



Harry and Ron spend the afternoon packing their trunks. Ron gleefully unwraps his broom when Mrs. Weasley returns from Diagon Alley and then they all head downstairs to enjoy a party in Ron and Hermione's honor. Moody checks out the writing desk for Mrs. Weasley and confirms that it's a boggart inside. Tonks and Sirius say that they weren't made prefects, but Lupin was. They say that James Potter wasn't a prefect either, which lifts Harry's spirits. He looks around and walks over to Fred when he beckons to Harry. He shows Harry some Venomous Tentacula seeds that Mundungus brought, but Harry feels uneasy and wonders if Mrs. Weasley will think that the twins are doing something illegal to get money.

Harry overhears Kingsley and Lupin talking about why Dumbledore didn't make Harry a prefect, so he moodily heads back toward the table. There, Moody calls Harry to him while Mrs. Weasley goes upstairs to deal with the boggart. Moody pulls out an old photo of the original Order of the Phoenix. Harry's stomach lurches when he sees Alice and Frank Longbottom, Neville's parents. Moody points out Lupin, Hagrid, Sirius, James, Lily, and Wormtail. Harry tries to smile but excuses himself, feeling upset by the picture of the young, happy people who would go on to experience so much tragedy.

On the first landing, Harry hears sobbing in the drawing room. He opens the door to see Ron, dead on the floor. Mrs. Weasley sobs "Riddikulus" and the body turns into Bill's. She continues to repeat the incantation and the boggart turns into each Weasley family member and Harry in turn. Lupin, Moody, and Sirius arrive, and Lupin vanishes the boggart. He holds Mrs. Weasley as she sobs that she's afraid everyone will die. She asks what'll happen to the children if something bad happens to her and Mr. Weasley, and Lupin assures her that they'll be cared for. Mrs. Weasley agrees that she's being silly, but Harry thinks Mrs. Weasley isn't silly at all. His forehead sears in pain again and Harry tells his scar to stop.

These little bits of information that Harry learns about his father help him feel more secure in his life and who he is. At least at this point in Harry's life, it's comforting to know that he's not alone and he's following in his father's footsteps by not being made a prefect. In the previous book, Harry gave his cash prize from the Triwizard Tournament to Fred and George. However, now he feels uneasy about this, and he knows that the twins might be in danger of being disowned by Mrs. Weasley if she thinks they're involved in illegal activity with Mundungus.



Seeing the photo reminds Harry that he's not the only one who lost his parents to Voldemort—Neville's parents are insane and stay permanently at St. Mungo's hospital. Neville, just like Harry, has to lean on others to support him and guide him through life. In a broader sense, these similarities reinforce how war begins to shift how people relate to each other and where they must go for help. The photo also seems foreboding for the current Order, considering the fates of so many of its past members.



As readers will remember from the third book, boggarts assume the shape of whatever one fears most. This scene thus shows both that Mrs. Weasley is terrified of losing her family to Voldemort and that she thinks of Harry as family. When Lupin comforts Mrs. Weasley, notice that he leans heavily on reminding her that her community is larger than just her immediate family. This serves the dual purpose of showing that the Weasleys and the resistance are people who, above all else, love and want their family and friends to make it through the war to come, in addition to drawing out other characters who, like Harry, need to learn to truly look to these friends and lean on them for comfort.



CHAPTER TEN

The next day the young people are to set out for Hogwarts. After a night of troubled dreams, culminating in a recurring one in which Harry walks down a dark hallway ending in a locked door, Harry wakes to discover that pandemonium has already broken out. Fred and George hurt Ginny when they bewitched their trunks to fly down the stairs and, according to Moody, they can't leave since Sturgis Podmore is missing and Harry can't go without a complete guard. Harry drags his trunk downstairs and Sirius, in his dog form, leaps at him. Mrs. Weasley exasperatedly tells Sirius that he can come with them. Mrs. Weasley leads Harry out to meet Tonks, who's dressed as an old lady.

Sirius barks and scares cats, happy to be out of the house, but the group makes it to King's Cross without incident. Ron, Hermione, and the rest of the Weasleys arrive soon after. Lupin and Moody shake Harry's hand and tell him to be careful, especially about what he writes in letters. Mrs. Weasley ushers them onto the train and Sirius chases the train until it rounds the corner. Ron and Hermione awkwardly excuse themselves to go to the prefects' carriage, so Harry follows Ginny to find a carriage.

Harry notices that students are staring at him. He and Ginny run into Neville at the end of the train and Ginny leads them into a car with only a girl named Luna Lovegood in it. Luna has long blond hair and seems a bit off; she's reading a magazine upside down. Excitedly, Neville shows Harry what he got for his birthday: a small gray cactus with boils. It's a rare *Mimbulus mimbletonia*, he says, and Neville shows Harry the cactus's defense mechanism. When he pokes the cactus, it squirts thick dark liquid everywhere, including on Harry. As Harry gasps, Cho Chang opens the compartment door, awkwardly says hello, and excuses herself. Ginny cleans up the mess with a wave of her wand.

An hour later, Ron and Hermione join Harry. They say that Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson are the Slytherin prefects. Ernie MacMillan and Hannah Abbot are prefects from Hufflepuff, and Anthony Goldstein and Padma Patil represent Ravenclaw. Hearing Padma's name, Luna vaguely says that she didn't enjoy going to the Yule Ball with Ron. Ron notes that he and Hermione are supposed to patrol the corridors and he suggests that he'll give Goyle lines, since he hates writing. At this Luna laughs uncontrollably and drops her magazine, *The Quibbler*. Harry picks it up when he notices that the picture on the front is a cartoon of Fudge throttling a goblin. There's an article inside suggesting that Sirius is actually a retired rock star and another saying that Fudge has ordered goblins to be cooked into pies.

Notice that at this point, Harry describes his dream as just a recurring dream and doesn't question it further than that. This is because nobody has told him that there's more to this dream. The amount of planning and effort that goes into getting everyone to Hogwarts safely reminds Harry again that resisting Voldemort isn't all exciting; these mundane activities are important to plan for too. The hubbub of getting to Hogwarts with the Weasleys has also become a tradition of sorts for Harry.



The warning to be careful about what Harry writes in letters suggests that the Order expects more surveillance at Hogwarts this year, given that Fudge is trying to dictate public opinion and could also be spying on Harry's letters to members of the Order. Sirius is somewhat reckless to come along, but he also clearly craves freedom from the house and wants to feel like he's doing something active.



Neville's happiness about his cactus and about Herbology in general shows that when given a good teacher and a subject that's interesting, Neville is as capable of learning as anyone else. This reminds Harry that he shouldn't underestimate his classmates; they're all good at something, even if he doesn't know what it is or value it as much as he might need to. Cho is Harry's crush, so he's especially embarrassed that she finds him in this situation.



Though the article suggesting that Fudge has had goblins cooked into pies is surely exaggerating, it's worth noticing that The Quibbler is, thus far, the only publication that picks up on how afraid Fudge is of beings that are different than he is. Even in questionable publications like The Quibbler, there can still be nuggets of truth or a valuable sense of what's going on in the world.



The rest of *The Quibbler* contains more wild articles, and Harry finds the one about Sirius to be the most believable. Hermione derisively says that *The Quibbler* is rubbish, and Luna snappily takes the magazine back—her father is the editor, she says. Minutes later, Draco Malfoy opens the door to the compartment to taunt Harry. He promises to "dog" Harry, but leaves when Hermione kicks him out. Harry fears that it was too reckless for Sirius to accompany them to the station and wonders if Lucius Malfoy recognized him in his dog form.

The weather worsens the closer the train gets to Hogwarts. Finally, they reach the Hogsmeade station. Luna carries Hedwig's cage for Harry and Harry is concerned when he sees Professor Grubbly-Plank, not Hagrid, preparing to take the first years across the lake. Alone, Harry moves to the horseless coaches and stops with a shock: they're no longer horseless. The creatures between the shafts are horse-like but reptilian, with wings and black flesh. Ron, Hermione, and Ginny join Harry and start toward an empty coach. Harry points out the horse to Ron, but Ron looks alarmed and says there's nothing there. Luna dreamily says that she can see them, and that they've always pulled the carriages. Harry wonders if he's truly sane.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Harry wonders if he and Luna are hallucinating. He joins in the conversation about Hagrid's absence and then silently wonders what's going on if Ron can't see the horses. Harry follows Ron and Hermione into the Great Hall and sits down with Neville and Nearly Headless Nick. They notice that Hagrid isn't at the staff table and wonder if he's still on his mission for Dumbledore. Then, they notice Umbridge at the staff table.

Professor McGonagall leads in the first years and sets the Sorting Hat on a stool. A rip in the brim opens and the hat begins to sing. Its song tells the story of the founding of Hogwarts and how at first, the different Houses worked in harmony. After a few years, however, each founder tried to rule alone, and things only calmed down after Slytherin left. The hat says that it's required to sort students, though it worries doing so does more harm than good. It closes by saying that the students must unite within Hogwarts because of what's going on in the outside world, and if the students don't unite, the school will crumble. Nearly Headless Nick notes that the hat has given advice before in difficult times.

Hermione's derision shows that she still leans heavily on formally published, academic written works, rather than sillier fare like The Quibbler. Her insult to Luna, however, suggests that while this may serve Hermione well much of the time, it does mean that she sometimes alienates people. Draco's mockery makes Harry question just how much he knows, especially as his father is a prominent Death Eater.



Given how out of it Luna seems to Harry, it's not entirely comforting that she can see the horses (though he'll later learn that he and Luna are sane and the horses are real). However, the moment when Ron looks alarmed and then makes Harry question his sanity shows how not being believed by people that he trusts can make Harry honestly concerned for his mental state. In turn, this suggests that without enough or proper information, Harry could be at risk of believing things that aren't real, or disbelieving things that are. In all, this entrance to school is very different to what Harry's used to, and these differences make him uncomfortable in what is usually a safe place for him.



Hagrid's absence tells Harry outright that things are going to be very different this year, while Umbridge's presence signals that Fudge has put a pawn at Hogwarts to continue his work of discrediting Harry and Dumbledore.



In addition to setting up a system in which good and evil fight more broadly, the Sorting Hat's song says that the way that Hogwarts is set up encourages students to see people as fundamentally different and unknowable, not as friends and allies—and also not as complex beings who can share multiple, sometimes contradictory traits at once. This again shows how fear and discrimination can be a part of the very fabric of society and be very hard to fix, as it's so normalized and to most, likely doesn't seem like a problem.



When the sorting is over, Dumbledore announces the start of the feast. Hermione and Nick discuss the Sorting Hat's warning, and Nick suggests that since the hat lives in Dumbledore's office, it likely picks up on what's going on. At the end of the feast, Dumbledore addresses the students. He introduces Professor Grubbly-Plank and Professor Umbridge, the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. As Dumbledore continues, Umbridge says, "hem, hem" and interrupts him. Dumbledore looks shocked for a moment but then sits down. Umbridge stands and addresses the students as though they're small children. She's a boring speaker and drones on about discouraging "progress for progress's sake" and abandoning inappropriate customs. The students talk amongst themselves and, except for Hermione, barely listen.

The way that Umbridge addresses the students as though they're young children suggests that she takes a very different view of education than most other professors at Hogwarts. Speaking to them in this kind of tone conveys that she doesn't think them able to think for themselves or move through the world competently. In turn, this allows Umbridge to show the students that she's the one in charge and the person tasked with molding their educational experiences at Hogwarts. Her words also show that she's essentially a politician and bureaucrat, using smooth and easily forgettable language to hide her true intentions.



Dumbledore leads the school in applause for the speech before resuming his announcements. Hermione darkly says that Umbridge's speech means that the Ministry is interfering at Hogwarts, a fact that neither Harry nor Ron picked up. As Dumbledore dismisses the school, Hermione and Ron call for the tiny first years. Harry smiles at them until he notices students staring at him with horrified looks. He makes his own way to Gryffindor Tower, thinking he should've expected this kind of treatment. Neville meets him at the Fat Lady's portrait and gives him the password to enter.

Hermione's ability to pick out what Umbridge meant in her speech speaks to the power of close listening and critical thinking skills, both of which are skills that Hermione learned through practice. Harry continues to feel alienated and discredited in a place that he usually thinks of as home.



Harry and Neville climb up to their dormitory and when they enter, Dean and Seamus stop talking abruptly. Harry wonders if they were talking about him, and if he's paranoid. They greet each other, and then Seamus carefully says that his mother didn't want him to come back to Hogwarts. She's been reading the *Prophet* and believes what it's saying about Harry and Dumbledore. Enraged, Harry changes and climbs into bed. Seamus asks Harry what happened when Cedric died, but Harry tells him to read the *Prophet* and move dormitories if he thinks Harry is a liar.

Again, Harry's concern that he's paranoid suggests that he's questioning his reality and whether or not he's seeing things as they truly are. The role of the Daily Prophet in this conflict shows how effective Fudge's choice to lean on the paper has been, as it's clearly a great way to sow discord at Hogwarts and in general society.



Seamus storms out and is on his way to find McGonagall when Ron arrives and learns what's going on. Growing red in the face, Ron says he believes Harry and threatens to give Seamus detention if he's rude to Harry. Seamus leaps into bed and rips his curtains closed, and Ron asks if anyone else has issues with Harry. Dean shrugs that his parents are Muggles, and Neville says that according to his gran, the *Daily Prophet*, not Dumbledore, is the one losing its touch. The boys fall silent and Harry wonders how many others will think he's crazy. He wonders if Dumbledore has been experiencing this all summer.

Just as Harry chose to not ruin Ron being a prefect for him, Ron is now able to return the favor by using his power to stand up for Harry and make Harry's life more manageable. By also standing up for Harry, Neville marks himself as an ally and shows Harry that his community is expanding. Harry's ability to question whether Dumbledore's been struggling with the same thing indicates that Harry is starting to come of age emotionally and develop empathy for others.



CHAPTER TWELVE

The next morning, Hermione comments on Harry's angry look before turning her attention to a notice on the bulletin board that Fred and George put up to find testers for their joke products. She pulls it down and tells Ron that they'll have to tell the twins to stop. As they head for breakfast, Ron explains what happened with Seamus, and Hermione sighs that Lavender feels the same way. Harry snaps at Hermione, but Hermione calmly tells Harry to stop losing his temper with her and Ron. She reminds him that both Dumbledore and the Sorting Hat said that students need to work together. Seeing a group of Ravenclaws looking scared of him, Harry sarcastically says they should make friends with them.

In the Great Hall, Harry, Ron, and Hermione notice that Hagrid is still absent. Hermione wonders if Dumbledore doesn't want to draw attention to Hagrid's absence. Angelina briskly approaches Harry; she says that she's holding tryouts for Gryffindor Keeper on Friday and Harry needs to be there. Hermione gets her *Daily Prophet* delivered by a barn owl and explains that it's best to be aware of what the enemy is saying.

As Hermione finishes reading, McGonagall hands out schedules. Ron groans: they have History of Magic, Potions, Divination, and Defense Against the Dark Arts. He says he wishes he had a Skiving Snackbox, and Fred and George offer to sell him Nosebleed Nougat for cheap, as the antidote doesn't work yet. Hermione tells the twins that they can't advertise for testers in the common room, but the twins insist that with it being **O.W.L.** year, Hermione will soon want a Snackbox for herself. They reminisce about the breakdowns their classmates had and say they almost didn't come back for their N.E.W.T.s, but they decided to use the year to conduct market research.

Harry and Ron play Hangman all through History of Magic, which annoys Hermione. In the courtyard after class, Cho approaches and greets Harry. As they begin to chat, Ron asks about the Quidditch team badge Cho is wearing. He accuses her of only supporting the team since they started winning, and Cho walks away. Hermione reprimands Ron and Harry thinks he'll be lucky to ever have a reasonable conversation with Cho. He reasons, however, that Cho is seeking him out, which seems like a good sign.

When Hermione so calmly tells Harry to stop snapping at her and Ron, she shows Harry how she wants to be treated as his friend and as a person on his side. By doing this so evenly and not losing her temper with Harry in return, Hermione gives Harry the opportunity to take her example and treat her with the same kindness. Note that even though Harry is the hero of the series, he still looks at the Ravenclaws as though they're potential enemies. This suggests that the Sorting Hat is right, and the setup of Hogwarts encourages this kind of behavior.



By continuing to read everything, even if Hermione knows that she's not going to like what she reads, Hermione is able to get a more nuanced sense of what's going on in the world. By looking at what the Prophet and by extension, what Fudge wants the public to know, she'll be able to work backwards to figure out what they're not saying.



The twins' disinterest in academics is shocking for Hermione, who places so much importance on doing well in school. The twins, however, are proof that one doesn't need a bunch of passing O.W.L. grades to be successful adults—they're already developing these joke products and displaying considerable ingenuity in the process.



Harry and Ron's behavior in History of Magic shows that they don't take this class seriously. However, remember that History of Magic has no practical element to it, so compared to the rest of their classes that have practical parts, it's boring and not at all engaging.



In Snape's dungeon, Snape reminds the class that he expects them all to achieve "Acceptable" results in their Potions [O.W.L.](#) He glares at Harry and says that most students won't continue on to the N.E.W.T. level. He then announces the potion for the day, the Draught of Peace. The potion is complex, and by the end of class only Hermione's looks correct. Snape stops in front of Harry's cauldron, points out that Harry clearly missed a step, and Vanishes Harry's entire potion. At lunch, Hermione admits that she thought Snape might be better this year since he's in the Order, but Ron says that he doesn't think Dumbledore should trust Snape. Annoyed by their bickering, Harry leaves early.

Harry is the first one up the ladder for Divination. Ron joins him a few minutes later and announces that he and Hermione have stopped arguing, but asks Harry to stop taking out his temper on them. Trelawney welcomes the class before Harry can reply. She mentions [O.W.L.s](#), but says that grades don't matter for the "sacred art." The students work on interpreting dreams and Trelawney assigns a dream diary as homework. Ron complains about their homework load all the way to Umbridge's class.

The Gryffindors are silent as they sit down in Umbridge's classroom. She brightly makes the students answer her "good afternoon" with, "good afternoon, Professor Umbridge." She remarks that their previous education hasn't followed Ministry standards and lists the aims for the class, which focus on theory and understanding the legal uses of defensive magic. Umbridge then tells the students to read the first chapter of their textbook. Harry is shocked to see that Hermione isn't reading. Her hand is up, but Umbridge ignores her. Umbridge only acknowledges Hermione when most of the class is clearly not reading.

Hermione bluntly says that the course aims don't mention *using* defensive spells. Umbridge insists that there's no need to use spells, and Ron and Harry begin to blurt that that's pointless. Umbridge demands that students raise their hands as Dean, Hermione, and Parvati all defend Lupin's teaching and note that Umbridge's methods seem useless. Parvati is shocked when Umbridge says that with enough theory, students should be able to perform spells for the first time in the practical portion of the [O.W.L.](#) exam. Angry, Harry notes that theory won't help against Voldemort. At this, Umbridge says that Voldemort's return is a lie. She assigns Harry detention.

Hermione expected here that being united with Snape ideologically in the fight against Voldemort might allow them to actually form a better, more personal relationship with the professor. Realizing that this isn't going to happen indicates that for Snape, there's something more important driving his personal hatred of Harry. He can be doing dangerous work for the greater good and still be an extremely unpleasant person to be around.



When even Trelawney is mentioning O.W.L.s, it tells Harry and Ron that these tests are important enough to land on the radar of the professor who's the least interested in standardized testing. Note too that Trelawney suggests that the test isn't even a good measure of who's proficient at Divination and who isn't; this again shows that testing isn't a good measure of some things.



Focusing on theory instead of practical applications of magic suggests that Umbridge doesn't actually care much about preparing students for the real world. While the course aims she sets out would certainly be useful when combined with practical magic, focusing entirely on theory and the legal particulars surrounding defensive magic indicates that there's more going on here than an educational model designed to help students.



Whatever one's opinion on the practical versus theory argument, Parvati has a point: Umbridge is going to keep students from doing well on their Ministry-approved standardized tests by not teaching them the actual spells. This makes it clear that Fudge—who's behind Umbridge in all of this—is willing to sacrifice an entire generation of future professionals in order to control what's going on at Hogwarts.



Harry stands and asks if Cedric Diggory died of his own accord. Umbridge says that Cedric's death was an accident. When Harry protests, Umbridge gives Harry a sealed note and sends him to McGonagall. McGonagall suspiciously takes Harry's note and asks him to confirm that he called Umbridge a liar. She sits and tells Harry to take a cookie. McGonagall says that Harry needs to be careful with Umbridge, as she reports to the Ministry. She also says that Harry has detention every day this week and snaps that this isn't about the truth; it's about Harry keeping his head down. McGonagall points Harry out of her office.

Here, McGonagall tries to impress upon Harry the importance of being politically savvy and recognizing where it's appropriate to push back and where to remain silent. As a justifiably angry young person, Harry doesn't have the willingness or self-control to censor himself for the sake of not getting in trouble. Through this protest, Harry is able to feel like he's at least doing something to resist.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

At dinner that night, Harry angrily listens to everyone talking about him. Nobody tries to pretend they're not. He grumbles that everyone seemed to believe Dumbledore last summer, but Hermione says that she's not sure anyone actually believed Dumbledore. As Harry snaps again, Hermione says that students had all summer to read the *Prophet* and decide that Dumbledore's crazy. They collect their bags to start on homework and Hermione furiously cries that Dumbledore can't possibly expect Umbridge to teach them in their O.W.L. year. Ron reminds Hermione that Umbridge also wants students to spy for her, and they start their Potions essay.

Because Harry is so wrapped up in his own experience and is so angry, he doesn't have the wherewithal to consider that Hermione is likely correct in her assessment. The Prophet did a fantastic job of discrediting Harry by preying on the fact that, judging by events in previous novels, the wider Wizarding population is relatively easy to manipulate through the press.



Hermione gets distracted by Fred, George, Lee Jordan, and a group of fainting first years. Hermione marches over and insists that the twins can't test on students. She threatens to write to Mrs. Weasley if they continue and then announces she's going to bed. She sets out some woolly objects and covers them in trash and explains to Ron that they're hats for house-elves to pick up while they're cleaning. Ron is aghast that Hermione would try to trick the elves into freedom. As soon as Hermione is gone, he removes the trash so the elves can at least see that they're hats.

Readers will recall that house-elves become free when their master gives them clothes, but most elves don't seem to want to be free, so Hermione is essentially trying to trick them because she assumes that she knows what's best for them. She still hasn't learned that to be a good ally, she needs to meet those she wants to help where they are and help them achieve goals that they want to meet. Though Ron is normally callous and uninterested in helping house-elves, the fact that he sees this attempt as the trick it is reminds the reader that anyone can do the right thing and advocate for others.



The next morning, both Flitwick and McGonagall also start their classes by talking about O.W.L.s. McGonagall insists that even Neville can do well in Transfiguration if he studies and builds up confidence. Harry and Ron spend their lunch researching their Potions essay and then join Hermione outside for Care of Magical Creatures with the Slytherins. Professor Grubbly-Plank introduces the class to bowtruckles, stick-like creatures that guard trees. She assigns a drawing as classwork, and as Harry moves to pick a bowtruckle, he tries to ask Grubbly-Plank about Hagrid. She refuses to answer, and Malfoy smirks that Hagrid might be injured by something "too large" for him. Harry wonders what Malfoy knows.

The fact that every teacher is bringing up O.W.L.s drives home the importance of these tests as a requirement to entering into the adult Wizarding world. This makes it so Harry, Ron, and Hermione begin to grasp the gravity of the tests and understand just how close they are to becoming adults in the world. McGonagall's comment to Neville about being able to pass Transfiguration reminds the reader that Neville isn't unintelligent; he's just unsupported in his studies and as a person and therefore lacks confidence.



Hermione assures Harry that Dumbledore would've said something if Hagrid was in trouble. Malfoy makes more mean comments about Hagrid and Harry follows Ron and Hermione to Herbology in a horrible temper. At the greenhouses, Luna approaches Harry and tells him that she believes that Voldemort is back. When Parvati and Lavender laugh at Luna's eccentric jewelry, Luna angrily says that people used to believe that the "Blibbering Humdinger" and the "Crumple-Horned Snorkack" weren't real either. Hermione reminds Luna that those creatures *aren't* real, which annoys Harry, since Luna could also see the winged horses. Ernie MacMillan also approaches Harry to voice his support.

Before dinner, Angelina storms up to Harry and reprimands him for getting detention on Friday night when he's supposed to be at Keeper tryouts. Harry glumly eats some dinner and hopes that Umbridge won't keep him too long. He heads for Umbridge's office and is horrified to see that it's covered in lace, flowers, and ornamental plates with kittens on them. Harry sits down and asks Umbridge if he can move his Friday night detention, but she smiles and says that this is his punishment for telling lies. She says that Harry is going to write lines with her special quill. She tells him to write "I must not tell lies" until the message "sinks in." She says that Harry doesn't need ink to write with this quill.

When Harry writes his first line, he gasps and sees that the words also etch themselves into the back of his hand and then heal over. He writes until after midnight. Umbridge inspects his red and sore hand and sends him away. Harry spends the next morning doing homework with Ron, who won't tell Harry why he didn't do his homework last night. Harry tells Ron that he did lines for Umbridge, but doesn't tell him about the special quill. The rest of Harry's day is awful, since he didn't do his homework and he feels as though he can't tell Ron and Hermione about Umbridge's punishment.

That night, Harry again writes lines until midnight. He does homework in the common room for hours after he gets back and the next night, "I must not tell lies" remains etched in the back of his hand, dripping blood. Umbridge lets him go at 7 pm. Harry wonders if he hates Umbridge more than Snape as he runs into Ron, hiding with his broomstick. Ron admits that he's been practicing to try out for Keeper. Then he catches sight of Harry's hand. He looks sick as Harry explains what Umbridge's lines really entail. Harry refuses to tell McGonagall or Dumbledore.

Hermione is able to trust Dumbledore so completely here because she's had more communication with Dumbledore this year than Harry has, given that she saw him over the summer. She's also generally better at taking the long view than the more impulsive Harry, who feels as though he has little reason to trust Dumbledore, since Dumbledore hasn't been around to help him interpret the scary things that have been happening to him. As Harry feels more cut off from adults he trusts, he in turn stops asking for help and tries to go it alone.



Umbridge's detention further compounds the trauma Harry experienced at the end of the last novel, both by causing even more physical pain and by showing Harry that he'll be punished for telling the truth about what happened. As a villain, Umbridge is a prime example of the fact that evil doesn't have to look a certain way—her exaggerated femininity shows Harry that he can't underestimate anyone, as evil can come in many forms.



Again, because Harry feels so alone in the world, he's not comfortable reaching out for help or in this case, even asking for comfort or validation that what's happening to him is horrendous. While it's unclear what Harry's reason is for keeping the particulars of his detention a secret, it nonetheless illustrates how Harry's sense of being alone causes him to isolate himself even further.



It's telling that when encouraged to ask an adult for help—even one like McGonagall, who isn't ignoring Harry—Harry still refuses. This shows that as Harry continues to feel more isolated and alone, he also begins to distrust even the most reliable and trustworthy adults who might be able to help him. Ron's sympathy, on the other hand, shows Harry that his sense that what's happening is wrong isn't out of line.



On Friday evening, Harry tries to shift his chair so he can see the Quidditch pitch from Umbridge's window. After dark, Umbridge approaches him to check his hand and as she touches him, Harry's scar throbs and he feels something strange in his stomach. He leaps away and Umbridge dismisses him. In the common room, Ron shouts that he got the position of Keeper. Harry approaches Hermione, who's asleep by the fire. She jerks awake and listens to what happened to Harry in Umbridge's office. Hermione wonders if it has nothing to do with Umbridge and suggests he speak to Dumbledore. Harry snaps that Dumbledore only cares about his scar. Hermione reminds him that he can't write to Sirius about it and heads to bed.

Here again, Hermione has no reason to not trust adults like Dumbledore or McGonagall, so her advice to go to Dumbledore makes perfect sense and reflects her sense of security with the adults in charge. However, it's also worth keeping in mind that because Hermione feels so secure, she's able to think more critically about what's going on with Harry—and Harry will later discover that she's right. This then shows how, because Harry is so afraid and angry about things, he ignores possible truths coming from even the people he does trust.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Harry wakes up early on Saturday and spends hours composing a letter to Sirius that seems innocuous, but subtly mentions his scar hurting and Hagrid's absence. Harry walks up to the Owlery and sends Hedwig off. He looks out and sees one of the winged horses flying out of the Forbidden Forest. Cho enters the Owlery and quietly says that she heard about why Harry got detention. She praises his bravery. As Harry helps her secure her parcel to an owl, Filch bursts in and accuses Harry of ordering Dungbombs. He's enraged when he learns that Harry already sent his letter.

It's important to note that despite Harry's unwillingness to seek help from McGonagall or Dumbledore, he's still willing to reach out to Sirius to ask for help and information. This speaks to the intensity of their relationship and how much Harry trusts Sirius, something that will be important later on. Harry still feels this way about Sirius because, as his godfather, Sirius seems less like an authority figure and more like a friend.



Harry thinks happily about his perfectly normal conversation with Cho as he heads for breakfast. He agrees to help Ron practice Quidditch before formal practice, which makes Hermione scold them. Hermione gasps when she opens her *Daily Prophet*; the Ministry knows that Sirius is in London. Harry also finds another short article about Sturgis Podmore trespassing at the Ministry. Podmore is now in Azkaban. Harry remembers that Podmore was supposed to accompany them to King's Cross and never did. Ron suggests that someone is trying to frame Podmore, and Hermione thinks it could be true.

Because Harry is so happy about having spoken to Cho without embarrassing himself, he ignores the troubling fact that Filch thinks he's ordering Dungbombs and wants to see his mail. This should be a flag for Harry that someone (probably Umbridge) wants to know who Harry is talking to, likely because of his connections to the Order of the Phoenix. Umbridge won't play fair in order to get the information she wants.



Harry and Ron walk to the Quidditch pitch and Ron does surprisingly well. In the changing rooms before practice, Fred and George taunt Ron. Out on the pitch, there are Slytherins there to torment Ron even more. Pansy Parkinson insults Angelina's braids as Angelina starts a passing exercise. Ron misses several passes and then accidentally hits Katie in the face. Then they release the Bludgers and the Snitch. Angelina shouts at Ron to cover his goals and when Katie's nosebleed doesn't stop, Angelina ends practice. Hermione tries to comfort Ron, but Ron won't allow her to.

Pansy Parkinson's insult in regard to Angelina's hairstyle tells the reader that in addition to discrimination about one's blood status, the Wizarding world also suffers from racism, just like the Muggle world—insulting Angelina's braids is mocking a common black hairstyle. This allows the Slytherins' awful nature to feel more real to readers, as this racism maps exactly onto the real world.



Ron and Harry spend all of Sunday working on their homework, and Ron wonders if Hermione would let them copy her essays. Late that night, Hermione points out several errors in Ron's essay and then points to Hermes, Percy's owl, outside the window. Ron reads Percy's letter and then disgustedly throws it at Harry and Hermione. In the letter, Percy congratulates Ron on being made a prefect, encourages Ron to distance himself from Harry and Dumbledore, and cryptically tells Ron to check the *Prophet* tomorrow. Harry tries to laugh, but Ron burns the letter. With a sigh, Hermione takes the boys' essays to correct them.

Harry thinks that Sirius is the only person who might understand how he's feeling, and as he glances at the fire, he thinks he sees Sirius's head flash there. A moment later, Sirius's grinning head appears in the fire. He says this is the only way he can respond to Harry's letter appropriately. Sirius says he's not concerned about Harry's scar hurting and doesn't think Umbridge is a Death Eater, though she's nasty: she hates part-humans and has introduced legislation trying to control merpeople and werewolves. Sirius isn't surprised that Umbridge isn't letting students do magic; he says that Fudge is afraid that Dumbledore is forming a private army to take on the Ministry. He also says that while Hagrid is late returning from his mission, Dumbledore isn't worried.

Sirius offers to meet the trio in Hogsmeade, but all of them refuse emphatically. Harry says he wants to keep Sirius out of Azkaban, which makes Sirius say that Harry isn't as much like James as he thought. He makes an excuse to leave and then his head disappears.

Percy believes that the only way forward is to get close to people with power, like Fudge. This is, notably, exactly what Umbridge is also doing as far as the reader can tell. This again expands Harry's view of evil—it doesn't just mean killing people or calling for blood purity, as Voldemort does. Instead, a person can be evil by trying to gain power through discrediting and harming others through legal channels.



Though Sirius makes several mistakes here in what he says to Harry, it's still important to note that unlike other adults, Sirius is at least talking to Harry, giving him information beyond what he asked for, and, for the most part, taking Harry's concerns seriously. Not acting more concerned about the pain in Harry's scar is where Sirius goes wrong here. By telling Harry it's nothing to worry about, he encourages Harry to diminish and discredit the very real and very scary things he's feeling through his scar, which again encourages Harry to go it alone.



Sirius's comment is a major blow for Harry, who idolizes his dad. This kind of a comment speaks to the more peer-like relationship Harry and Sirius have, as this is an inappropriate thing for a guardian to say.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The next morning, Hermione finds the article Percy alluded to on the front page. The headline reads that Fudge has appointed Umbridge to the position of "Hogwarts High Inquisitor." It includes comments from Percy himself as well as a discussion of Educational Degree Twenty-two, which gives Fudge power to appoint teachers if Dumbledore can't find one. As High Inquisitor, Umbridge will also be able to inspect the other teachers. Harry and Hermione are livid, though Ron is pleased at the thought of what McGonagall will say when she's inspected.

Umbridge's appointment to High Inquisitor shows the lengths to which Fudge is willing to go to take control of Hogwarts. (Note that the name of this position also calls back to the Spanish Inquisition, a brutal time in history when those who were perceived to be out of line with those in power were tortured and killed.) Now, Umbridge will be able to take issue with teachers' classes and force them to change things to fit Ministry standards—which, given what Sirius said, means that students won't learn practical skills at all. In doing this, Fudge continues to sacrifice the future Wizarding world for his own short-term political gains.



In Potions, Harry's essay receives a D. He tries his best when he brews his potion for the day, and it's at least the right color. At lunch, Hermione, Fred, and George discuss the [O.W.L.](#) grading system. The lowest grade is (according to the twins) T for "Troll," and Harry vows to work harder so he doesn't receive T's. The twins also say that Umbridge inspected Flitwick and it went fine. Harry and Ron find Umbridge in Trelawney's tower, ready to conduct her inspection. Trelawney looks disturbed as she sweeps around the room and answers Umbridge's questions. She gives Umbridge a scandalized look when Umbridge asks her to predict something, but then shakily predicts "grave peril." Harry feels bad for Trelawney until she angrily interprets his mundane dreams as foretelling his death.

In Defense Against the Dark Arts, Umbridge assigns the class to read chapter two of their textbook. Hermione again raises her hand and Umbridge tries to whisper to Hermione privately. Hermione says she's read the whole book already, and she disagrees with the author's insistence that jinxes aren't useful. Umbridge takes five points from Gryffindor, insults all the former Defense Against the Dark Arts teachers except for Professor Quirrell, and then gives Harry another week of detention when he points out that Quirrell was possessed by Voldemort. Harry does his best to not complain when his hand starts bleeding immediately after his first line that night.

The next morning, Angelina yells at Harry for getting detention, and McGonagall chastises her before also scolding Harry. Hermione suggests that McGonagall has a point, and Harry doesn't speak to her until Transfiguration, when they find Umbridge there. Umbridge tries to interrupt McGonagall as she introduces the lesson, but McGonagall points out that she doesn't usually allow interruptions. Umbridge remains in her corner scribbling notes for the rest of class and after class, Harry smiles at McGonagall.

Umbridge inspects Grubbly-Plank that afternoon and asks questions about Hagrid's absence. Grubbly-Plank refuses to answer, but says that Dumbledore is a supportive boss. Umbridge asks students about injuries in the class, and when Malfoy mentions that he was attacked by a hippogriff, Harry points out that Malfoy didn't follow Hagrid's directions. Umbridge gives Harry another night of detention.

Harry's ability and willingness to feel sympathy for Trelawney shows that he's growing up and in doing so, is developing empathy for people who are different than he is. Given what the reader knows about Trelawney, predicting Umbridge's death isn't exactly out of character or unexpected—but Umbridge's reaction points to the fact that since Trelawney does this with exhausting regularity and nobody's dead yet, it's not effective or compelling.



Giving Harry another week of detention makes it very clear that Umbridge is willing to physically harm students and do whatever it takes to keep Harry quiet. Further, as the High Inquisitor, it's unlikely that any other teacher would be able to stand up to her at this point, at least if they didn't want that to count against them in their inspection. Harry's desire to speak the truth shows the power of telling his story, which allows him to remember that his experience was real.



By treating Umbridge like just any other student in her class and demanding respect and silence, McGonagall uses her power as a long-standing, respected teacher to show the students that someone will stand up for them. This kind of rebellion shows Harry too that he doesn't need to go for big actions to make a difference; he can just stand up for what's right when he can.



An ethical inspector would of course want to know that Malfoy was hurt because he didn't follow directions. By punishing Harry here, Umbridge clearly shows that her job is to suppress the truth when it doesn't support her aims of bringing the school under her control.



That night, Harry leaves Umbridge's office just before midnight. His hand bleeds through a scarf and Hermione offers him a bowl of pickled murtlap tentacles to soak his hand. Harry refuses to complain to McGonagall, but Hermione says they have to do something about Umbridge. She suggests that they should learn Defense Against the Dark Arts themselves, as it's important to prepare themselves. She suggests that Harry teach them, and Ron seems intrigued by the idea. Harry thinks they're joking, but Ron lists Harry's accomplishments. Harry snaps and shouts that it's not all memorizing spells; fighting Voldemort is terrifying. Hermione says they need to know what that's like.

Hermione's suggestion shows how seriously she takes both her O.W.L.s and the threat of Voldemort's return. She also has a point that even in a safe classroom setting, it's difficult to prepare for the realities of fighting someone who's fighting to kill. Because he's fought Voldemort before, Harry's lived experience is a valuable thing for Hermione and others to hear about and learn from, as listening to him will help them be prepared for what's to come and understand what this kind of fighting is like.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Two weeks later, Hermione brings up the idea of Harry giving Defense Against the Dark Arts lessons again. Harry says that he's thought about it, but reminds Hermione that most of his success was due to luck. Hermione points out that Viktor Krum even said that Harry was advanced. Ron latches onto the fact that Hermione is still in communication with Krum, but Hermione ignores him and asks Harry if he'll teach them and possibly some other people. She suggests that they meet up with any interested students in Hogsmeade next week, since she reasons that they'll need to keep their group quiet.

Though Harry is humble about his experience level, it's still important to remember that whether he's inexperienced or not, Harry still has something that's allowed him to successfully fight Voldemort on several occasions—and whatever that is, even if it's luck or critical thinking skills, it's something that others could benefit from hearing about. This again reminds the reader that success isn't all about skills acquired in class; it's also about learning to read and respond to others.



In the week before the Hogsmeade trip, Harry worries that Sirius will try to show up. Ron and Hermione reason that Sirius will listen to Dumbledore, and Dumbledore certainly wouldn't allow it. On the morning of the trip, Filch sniffs at Harry before he lets Harry out of the gates. Harry laughs and tells Ron and Hermione about Filch's Dungbomb accusation, which concerns Hermione.

Hermione's concern speaks to her status as a bit of an outsider to Harry's experience. Especially because she's still regularly reading the Daily Prophet and knows what the Ministry is doing to discredit Harry, she's able to put the Dungbomb accusation in a wider context and see it as the worrying thing it is.



They walk through the village to the Hog's Head pub, which is a dodgy establishment and where Hermione believes the group won't be overheard. Harry is concerned; there are few patrons, but all of them look secretive. The bartender seems surprised when Harry, Ron, and Hermione order butterbeers. They find a table and soon after, a crowd of people arrives. It includes Neville, Dean, Lavender, Parvati and Padma, and Cho with one of her friends, Marietta. Luna, the entire Gryffindor Quidditch team, and several Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws walk in as well. Fred counts and orders 25 butterbeers for the crowd.

Harry's instinct is correct here; both the Order and the Ministry will find out that this meeting happened because such a quiet pub means it's easier to hear what's going on. This shows the reader that Harry does have skills and instincts that Hermione doesn't. The interest in the group suggests that Hermione is correct, and more people want to believe Harry (or at least hear his story) than he thought.



Harry looks furiously at Hermione, who assures him that she'll speak first. Hermione awkwardly tells the group that they need to take their Defense Against the Dark Arts education into their own hands, both to pass their [O.W.L.s](#) and because Voldemort is back. Zacharias Smith, a Hufflepuff Quidditch player, asks Hermione for proof, and Harry realizes what everyone wants: to hear what he has to say about Voldemort. He tells Zacharias that he saw Voldemort but won't waste time convincing anyone or talking about Cedric's murder. A girl named Susan Bones asks Harry if he can conjure a Patronus, and others ask Harry about other skills he has. Harry tries to brush them off, but Hermione brings things back to order.

Ernie MacMillan suggests that this is the most important thing for them to do right now, and Hermione shares that Umbridge thinks that Dumbledore is trying to mobilize an army of students. Luna says that Fudge has his own private army of heliophaths, but Hermione snaps that heliophaths aren't real. The students discuss when and how often they should meet, but decide to figure out where to meet later. Taking a deep breath, Hermione suggests they sign their names and agree to not tell Umbridge about what they're doing. Ernie and Zacharias seem concerned, but everyone signs.

As the trio leaves, Ron spits that Zacharias is a jerk. Hermione says that it's better to have more people, and mentions that Michael Corner only came because he's dating Ginny. They enter a quill shop as Ron sputters angrily about learning that Ginny has a boyfriend. Harry realizes that this is why Ginny will talk to him now, as Hermione tells Ron to calm down. She also asks Harry about how things are going with Cho, but Harry ignores her.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Harry spends the weekend doing homework, but he feels satisfied knowing that he's rebelling against Umbridge. It's also heartening to know people believe he's not lying. On Monday morning, Harry and Ron join students around the bulletin board to inspect a new sign. It's an order from Umbridge, saying that all student groups are disbanded and must seek permission from Umbridge to re-form. Harry knows that this isn't a coincidence, and Ron suggests that Zacharias Smith told Umbridge about their meeting. He turns to run up the girls' staircase to tell Hermione, but the stairs turn into a slide—a way of keeping boys out of the girls' dorms. Hermione slides down a few minutes later. Though she looks upset about the notice, she says that they'd know if someone told—she bewitched the parchment they signed, and if a person tells, they'll break out in terrible acne.

Harry's coldness with Zacharias shows that Harry doesn't necessarily see those in other Houses as friends or allies. This goes back to the Sorting Hat's suggestion that sorting students doesn't do them any favors. The fact that even Harry, the hero of the novel, looks at other Houses with suspicion shows that even the "good guys" don't think of Hogwarts as a unified whole, thanks to the way the school is set up.



By asking everyone to sign their names and keep the meeting a secret, Hermione ensures that their group will function much like the Order of the Phoenix does: secretly, but pulling from people in society to form it. The fact that Hermione is choosing to model this group on the Order of the Phoenix shows what she learned from living at Grimmauld Place over the summer. Now, she's able to put her knowledge to work.



Ginny having a boyfriend at all speaks to the fact that all of the characters are beginning to come of age. The fact that she's dating a Ravenclaw also shows that there are people who see individuals in other Houses as worthy of consideration and of interacting with as partners, not adversaries. This suggests that romantic coming of age can potentially help heal divisions in the Houses.



Notice that Ron's first instinct is to blame someone who attended the meeting, not any of the unknown patrons at the Hog's Head. This again illustrates how Hogwarts is set up in such a way as to encourage this kind of suspicion, rather than show students that they're all on the same team. Hermione's curse on the membership list attaches major consequences to ratting out the group, which shows that what Hermione values most of all right now is loyalty—and rightly so, given what's at stake with Umbridge.



In the Great Hall, all the students seem on edge about the notice. Harry mutters to Fred and George that they're going to hold meetings anyway. Hermione motions for Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw members to not come over to chat. A bit later, Angelina tells Harry and Ron that the Gryffindor Quidditch team has to apply for permission to re-form, and she begs Harry to behave for Umbridge.

A few minutes into History of Magic, Hermione pokes Harry and points to the window. Hedwig is there. Harry slips out of his seat and lets Hedwig in, noticing that she's clearly hurt. Harry tells Professor Binns that he's ill and asks to leave class. He goes to the staff room to find Grubbly-Plank. McGonagall opens the door and Grubbly-Plank inspects Hedwig, reasoning that the Hogwarts thestrals wouldn't have gotten her. Harry says that Hedwig came from London, which makes McGonagall raise her eyebrows. Grubbly-Plank offers to take Hedwig for a day, and as the bell rings, McGonagall warns Harry that communication in and out of Hogwarts is being monitored.

Hedwig's letter is from Sirius, and says that he'll talk to them again in the fire. Harry shares everything with Ron and Hermione, and they wonder if someone tried to intercept Hedwig. Hermione worries that they can't even warn Sirius not to talk to them without that being intercepted. Down in the dungeons at Potions class, Malfoy boasts that Umbridge already gave the Slytherin Quidditch team permission to practice. He insults Mr. Weasley and says that Harry might still end up in St. Mungo's hospital, since he's insane. At this, Neville tries to charge Malfoy, but Harry and Ron pull him back. Harry doesn't tell Ron that Neville behaved like this because his parents are in St. Mungo's.

Snape introduces Umbridge to the class—she'll be inspecting—and Harry tries to decide which professor he wants to win this battle. In his desire to listen to Umbridge and Snape's conversation, he makes mistakes in his potion. Umbridge suggests that the class shouldn't be working on such advanced potions, and she asks Snape about his unsuccessful applications for the Defense Against the Dark Arts position. Snape angrily Vanishes Harry's foul-smelling potion and assigns him an extra essay. In Divination later, Trelawney seems oddly upset and explains to Parvati and Lavender that she's on probation.

Holding the meetings anyway allows Harry to feel as though he's effectively rebelling against Umbridge. The fact that this rebellion is quiet also speaks to what Harry learned over the summer at Grimmauld Place: resistance doesn't need to be loud or flashy to be effective.



All the signs and McGonagall's warning point to the possibility that Umbridge is targeting Harry specifically, rather than trying to repress the entire student body in all the same way. Grubbly-Plank's casual mention of thestrals introduces the name of the creature that Harry will later connect to the invisible, spectral horses. The fact that Hedwig is hurt might mean that someone intercepted her on her journey, intending to read Harry's mail.



Neville, like Harry, is keeping secrets that in turn keep him isolated and unknowable in the eyes of his classmates. Though Neville is of course entitled to share or not share the truth about his parents, sharing this information could help Neville feel more integrated into the student body and make him a more sympathetic individual in the eyes of others.



To many, working on advanced material would be the mark of a good teacher—it would imply that the students already have a firm enough grasp of basic concepts to expand what they're doing beyond grade level. This again shows that Umbridge is trying to figure out how to use Hogwarts to control what and how much students learn—and an uneducated population is much easier to control.



After dinner, Angelina tells Harry and Ron that Umbridge supposedly needs time to think about whether Gryffindor can play Quidditch. Harry spends his evening trying to concentrate on his homework while checking the fire for Sirius and watching Fred demonstrate the effects of the Puking Pastilles. Harry can't figure out how Fred and George each only got three [O.W.L.s](#), since they're clearly knowledgeable and making money.

A bit later, when the common room is empty, Sirius's head appears in the fire. He grins and says he knows about the secret Defense Against the Dark Arts group, as the Hog's Head was the worst choice for a meeting place. He says that Mundungus was dressed as a witch and overheard them. Sirius says that Mrs. Weasley doesn't want Ron to participate, but she can't say so herself since she's "on duty" tonight. Sirius says that he believes the organization is a great idea, even if they do get expelled—at least they'll be prepared. He helps them brainstorm where to hold meetings, but then he disappears suddenly. Hermione gasps and she, Harry, and Ron race away from the fireplace—they can see Umbridge's hand grabbing about in the flames.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

In Charms, Harry and Hermione discuss that Umbridge is reading Harry's letters. She says Filch's Dungbomb accusation was probably a cover story to read his mail. She successfully silences her bullfrog—the spell they're practicing—and then swaps Ron for his raven. She silences it too. That afternoon, Angelina gleefully tells Harry and Ron that McGonagall stepped in and the Gryffindor Quidditch team can practice again. Ron notices Hermione looking out the window with an unfocused look, and Hermione asks whether they're doing the right thing forming their group. It concerns her that Sirius thinks it's a good idea, as he's restless and probably gets a lot of pleasure from encouraging mayhem at school.

When Harry and Ron head down to the changing rooms that evening for Quidditch practice, the weather is so horrendous that Fred and George are debating whether to use their Skiving Snackboxes to get out of practice. Ron is interested in trying a Fever Fudge, but George tells Ron that he has massive boils between his legs from the fudge. Angelina leads everyone onto the pitch and though she keeps practice going for an hour, nobody can see and it's a waste of time. As Fred and George complain about their boils, Harry's scar suddenly burns, making him jump.

Harry's comment about Fred and George's poor O.W.L. scores reminds the reader that there are more ways to be successful in life than just doing well on standardized tests. The fact that Fred and George are successfully selling their wares, and can develop them in the first place, shows that test scores aren't always a direct correlation to intelligence.



Sirius amplifies and reinforces Harry's suspicions that test scores aren't everything, and certainly aren't the most useful things to have as an adult. He says clearly that it's better to have the information than the scores, which, coming from an adult that Harry trusts and admires, means that Harry takes this to heart. Mrs. Weasley being "on duty" for something keys Harry into the fact that the Order is guarding something, and it requires overnight shifts to do so. Umbridge is clearly increasing her surveillance of the school, as she's even searching the fires now.



Again, because Hermione functions as a more impartial observer to Harry's train of thought, she's able to see that Sirius isn't an entirely positive and mature influence in Harry's life. While it's true that Sirius is performing a necessary role for Harry by validating his experiences and making him feel cared for, Hermione is right that Sirius is likely trying to live vicariously through them by encouraging them to form dangerous groups like this.



Fred and George's willingness to test their products on themselves in the early stages of development speaks to how much they care about making these products safe and effective for others. This also shows their essentially reckless nature when it comes to their own safety.



Ron hangs back after everyone leaves, and Harry explains that his scar hurt because Voldemort is angry. He's not sure how he knows this, but he knows it's true. Harry continues, saying that Voldemort wants something done faster. At Ron's prodding, Harry thinks back to when his scar hurt in Umbridge's office. Then, he says, Voldemort had been happy. Impressed, Ron says Harry is reading Voldemort's mind, but Harry says he's just feeling Voldemort's extreme moods. He refuses to tell Dumbledore and silently wonders what Voldemort wants to happen. He thinks Voldemort is trying to get at the weapon that the Order is guarding.

Back in the common room, Harry ignores Ron's concerned looks and tries to concentrate on his Potions essay. After Ron goes to bed, Harry thinks that the *Daily Prophet* would think he's truly crazy if they knew what was happening to Harry, and wonders what this strange connection to Voldemort even is. Harry falls asleep and dreams that he's walking along a corridor and will finally open the door at the end. He wakes with a start when Dobby taps him—the house elf is by Harry's bed, and has brought Hedwig. Dobby is wearing what looks like every one of Hermione's elf hats. Happily, Dobby says he's taking all the hats for himself and Winky, as the other elves are insulted by them and now refuse to clean the common room.

Concerned, Dobby asks Harry about his dream and asks if Harry needs help. Harry asks Dobby if he knows of a place where a large group could practice magic in secret, and Dobby tells him about the Room of Requirement. He says it's hidden most of the time, but it becomes whatever a person needs if they walk past thinking of needing something. It sounds perfect. The next day, Harry tells Hermione and though she's skeptical, she agrees to spread the word.

At 7:30 that night, using the Marauder's Map, Harry, Ron, and Hermione sneak up to the seventh floor where the Room of Requirement is. The three walk back and forth, thinking of what they need, and a huge door appears. Inside is a room lined with bookcases. Soon, everyone arrives, and Hermione suggests they vote on a leader. They unanimously elect Harry and then decide to call themselves Dumbledore's Army, or the D.A. Harry next introduces *Expelliarmus*, the Disarming Charm. Zacharias Smith is derisive of learning such a basic spell, but he goes silent when Harry says the charm has saved his life from Voldemort.

Harry continues to fixate on the Order guarding a "weapon," showing that he hasn't entirely internalized the idea that there's more to conducting war than trying to keep dangerous weapons from changing hands. Harry's refusal to tell Dumbledore about what he's feeling means that he won't be able to get help making sense of what's happening to him, thereby making Harry vulnerable to manipulation.



Because Harry is aware of how his knowledge of what Voldemort is feeling would come across, he knows that it's even more important to not mention what's happening. Again, this only functions to isolate Harry and make him even less willing to ask for help, as he fears that nobody else will believe him or take him seriously. Though Ron can show Harry that he cares by acting concerned, he's not the best person to have as a sole confidante—he doesn't know any more than Harry does.



Recognizing that Dobby could have valuable information about the school shows that Harry is learning to expand his community to include others, specifically those who are less powerful than he is. Dobby is one individual who offers Harry a window into the world of beings who aren't valued by Wizards.



While the Room of Requirement shows itself to Harry and the novel's "good guys" in this instance, it's worth noting that the Room would presumably show itself to anyone who needed something, regardless of what House they were in or what their intentions for the room might be. Harry shows that's learned about the value of mastering the basics when he defends the simple disarming spell. He knows that fancy magic isn't more likely to work against Voldemort.



Harry divides everyone into pairs and works with Neville. He's glad he decided to start with basics, as many people are struggling. Harry walks around, correcting people, and everyone slowly improves. Cho blushes and makes mistakes when Harry is around. She explains that Marietta is so upset about being a part of the secret group because her mother works at the Ministry. Cho proudly declares her own desire to fight Voldemort after what happened to Cedric, and Luna pipes up to voice her own support for thwarting the Ministry. Soon after, Harry ends the lesson and uses the Marauder's Map to help everyone get back to their common rooms.

Leading Dumbledore's Army allows Harry the opportunity to see his classmates from other Houses as people who can work with him to fight Umbridge, not as adversaries. Again, starting with the basics shows that Harry understands the importance of learning boring and mundane things, as it's only through having a firm grasp of the building blocks that a person can go on to perform more advanced and more exciting magic.



CHAPTER NINETEEN

The secret of the D.A. makes Harry feel powerful, and makes Umbridge's Defense Against the Dark Arts classes bearable. He thinks about his classmates' progress—even Neville is improving. Hermione soon comes up with a method of communicating the next meeting time. She creates fake Galleons and bewitches them to show the date and time when Harry changes the numbers on his own. Everyone is impressed with Hermione, but Harry quietly points out that the Galleons remind him of the Death Eaters' Dark Mark tattoos, which Voldemort uses to summon them.

Harry's positive emotions surrounding standing up to Umbridge show that even quiet rebellion can be extremely effective at boosting morale—it's important that people feel like they're doing something, even if what they're doing is secret and subversive. Neville's improvement reinforces McGonagall's earlier assertion that with confidence, Neville can do as well as anyone else.



D.A. meetings almost stop in the lead-up to the first Quidditch match between Gryffindor and Ravenclaw. McGonagall declines to assign homework in the week before the match, while Snape ignores reports of Slytherins hexing Gryffindor players in the halls. Harry feels optimistic despite Ron's spotty performance, though he worries because Ron seems to take the Slytherins' taunts seriously. On the morning of the match, Ron looks ill. Harry tries to make Ron eat breakfast as Ron insists that he's a horrible player. Luna walks up behind Harry and Ron wearing a huge lion-shaped hat that roars to wish them luck.

Ron hasn't spent the last four years dealing with Slytherins' taunts in the lead-up to Quidditch matches, while Harry has. Because of this experience, Harry is better able to block out the taunts. This also translates to how Harry deals with the Ministry's attempts to discredit him. While it still gets to him, Harry has more practice dealing with so much negative attention and presumably handles it better than someone like Ron would be able to.



A few minutes later, Harry leads Ron to the changing rooms. Hermione whispers to Harry that he shouldn't let Ron see the Slytherins' badges, but Harry notices that they say, "Weasley is our king." Angelina notes that the new Slytherin Beaters are Crabbe and Goyle, and Harry assures her that they're unintelligent brutes. On the field, the entire Slytherin team is wearing the badges, but the game begins with little fanfare. Lee Jordan pauses his commentary to point out the song the Slytherins are singing, which says that Ron is their king because he's a terrible Keeper. Realizing what the song is about, Lee shouts even louder.

The song "Weasley is our King" acts as a foil of sorts for the D.A. It shows how effective simple things can be at riling people up and making people feel like they're doing something to help their side. The fact that they even have badges to match the song shows just how thorough Malfoy and the other Slytherins can be in their cruelty.



Harry watches with horror as Ron lets the Slytherins score three times. Seeing the Snitch, Harry dives, hits Malfoy's hand out of the way, and grabs the Snitch. A Bludger hits Harry in the back, knocking him off his broom. Malfoy lands nearby, and as the Gryffindor team lands, he angrily shouts that he wanted to write more verses insulting Mrs. Weasley and Mr. Weasley. Harry tries to hold back George as the rest of the team restrains Fred, but when Malfoy insults Lily Potter, Harry and George rush Malfoy and punch him. They stop when Madam Hooch jinxes them and sends them to McGonagall's office.

Enraged, McGonagall shouts at Harry and George, but she stops short when Umbridge steps in and offers to "help." McGonagall refuses and gives both boys detentions, but Umbridge pulls out a new Educational Degree that gives her the power to punish students however she sees fit. She bans Harry, George, and Fred from Quidditch and insists they hand over their brooms so she can lock them up. It barely feels like Gryffindor won the match. Hermione and Harry are the last ones in the common room when Ron steps through the portrait hole. He says he's going to resign as Keeper but yelps when Harry tells him the news. Ron takes responsibility for letting the song get to him. Hermione, standing at the window, says that Hagrid is home.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Harry, Ron, and Hermione bundle up and cover themselves in the Invisibility Cloak to walk to Hagrid's. They pass Nearly Headless Nick humming "Weasley is our King" and shuffle through the snow. Hagrid lets them in and Hermione screams at the sight of Hagrid: his face is bruised and cut, and his hair is matted with blood. Hagrid refuses to say what happened, makes tea, and slaps a greenish steak onto his face. He says it's a dragon steak and helps the stinging of his wounds. Hermione asks if the giants beat Hagrid, and Hagrid angrily accuses them of being nosy. He admits that he did see the giants and agrees to tell the story when Ron and Harry offer to tell Hagrid about Harry's dementor attack in return.

Hagrid sighs and says that he and Madame Maxime set off after school ended the previous year and traveled for a month to get to the mountains where the giants are. It took so long because the Ministry was following them. They found the valley where the giants were hiding, and there were only about 80 of them. They walked down into the camp toward Karkus, the Gurg (chief), with a gift of everlasting fire held over their heads. Karkus didn't speak English, so he called some giants who did know English to translate. Hagrid and Madame Maxime said they came on Dumbledore's behalf and would return the next day with another gift.

Fred, George, and Harry's attempts and successes in hurting Malfoy for insulting their families again shows how easy it is for someone like Malfoy to weaponize an enemy's love for others to incite them to action that feels good and righteous, but isn't the best idea in practice. Given what the reader knows of McGonagall, however, the reader, Harry, and the twins can trust that she'll be fair, if possibly harsh.



Though Umbridge is successfully taking control over the school, she also should be aware that she just gave Harry a lot more time to think up ways to resist her that were once taken up with Quidditch practice. Though Umbridge has many powers and tools at her disposal, she's also under the impression that someone like Harry is going to let her get away with what she's doing. She knows that Harry hates her, but underestimates his (and Hermione's) intelligence at undermining her in quieter ways.



In Hagrid's case, the trauma he clearly experienced at the hands of the giants is more physical than emotional, yet the happiness and pleasure he goes on to take in telling the story supports the novel's assertion that telling one's story can be cathartic. Further, the draw of being able to tell Hagrid about Harry's attack shows Harry that he has another ally in the school who will believe him—and judging by Hagrid's willingness to talk, won't ignore him.



By taking things slowly with the giants and making it clear that they're not visiting to make trouble, Hagrid and Maxime try to show the giants that they respect them and understand that this is something that the giants will have to choose independently—Hagrid and Maxime can't and won't force them to fight for Dumbledore. By showing them this respect, it's more likely that the giants will be receptive to the message.



The next day, Hagrid and Maxime gave Karkus a goblin-made battle helmet and Karkus seemed interested in Dumbledore's message. That night, however, a brawl broke out among the giants. Karkus was dead in the morning, and a giant named Golgomath was the new Gurg. Golgomath wasn't interested in talking and tried to hurt Hagrid, so Maxime cursed Golgomath and they ran. They spent the next few days watching Golgomath speak to Death Eaters. They then checked caves to find giants who might be sympathetic to Dumbledore and they found several who were interested. Golgomath found and killed those giants a few days later, and now, no giants are coming to help the Order. Hermione asks about Hagrid's mother, and Hagrid gruffly says that she died years ago.

Before Hagrid can try to explain his injuries, someone knocks on the door. Harry sees Umbridge's shadow, sweeps the Invisibility Cloak over Ron and Hermione, and hisses for Hagrid to hide their mugs. Hagrid lets Umbridge in and she rudely introduces herself. She asks about the footprints leading to Hagrid's door and Hagrid feigns ignorance. Umbridge searches Hagrid's cabin, asks about his injuries, and asks where Hagrid has been. Hagrid's excuses are feeble, and Harry believes that Umbridge knows that Hagrid has been in the mountains. As Umbridge leaves, she tells Hagrid to expect an inspection and threatens to fire him.

When they're sure Umbridge is gone, Harry, Ron, and Hermione throw off the cloak and Hermione tries to convince Hagrid to show them boring creatures in class that won't offend Umbridge. He happily refuses and says he has a good surprise planned for his first class. Hagrid tries to sooth Hermione and then shows the trio out of his cabin. Hermione erases their footprints as they walk and vows to plan Hagrid's lessons to protect him from Umbridge.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Hermione goes back to Hagrid's the next morning while Harry and Ron do homework. She returns before lunch and says that he's insistent that he wants to teach them interesting things. On Monday morning, everyone is thrilled to have Hagrid back, though Harry also recognizes that Grubbly-Plank's lessons were safer and better than Hagrid's usually are.

Because Dumbledore doesn't have any power at the Ministry right now, it's possible he can't promise giants anything substantial like the Death Eaters, who wish to control the Ministry (and by extension, the offices that control what giants can and can't do under Wizarding law), can. The Death Eaters may simply be able to offer more at this point because they're better connected. This should impress upon Harry the importance of spreading the word of Voldemort's return, as Dumbledore's side is quickly losing allies.



Umbridge is automatically biased against Hagrid both because she knows he's close to Dumbledore and he's a half-giant. Given her previously expressed dislike of "half-breeds," she sees him as less-than because of his heritage, and also wants to use him to gain information about Dumbledore. Unfortunately, Hagrid has never been very good at lying or keeping secrets.



Because Hagrid has been gone and doesn't know how horrible Umbridge is yet, he isn't in a place to take Hermione's warnings seriously and compromise his own desires for the sake of his job.



Hagrid is one of Harry's closest friends, but he can also recognize that Hagrid isn't necessarily the best teacher, especially given his love of creatures that others might consider dangerous.



Hagrid greets his class at the edge of the forest, carrying half of a cow carcass, and then leads them into the trees. He snaps at Malfoy when Malfoy suggests that whatever creatures they're looking for aren't safe. He then throws the cow carcass on the ground and makes a shrieking cry. A few minutes later, one of the ghostly winged horses enters the clearing and begins to tear at the cow. Harry is relieved that he's not crazy, but Ron asks why Hagrid doesn't call for the animals again. Most students look just as confused. Only Harry, Neville, and one other student can see the creatures. The others gasp when Hagrid points to the carcass, which to them, looks like it's vanishing. He says the creatures are called thestrals.

Parvati insists that thestrals are unlucky, but Hagrid says they're useful and clever. Hermione raises her hand and says that the only people who can see thestrals are those who have seen someone die. As Hagrid starts to talk about the animals, Harry hears Umbridge's "hem, hem." Hagrid greets her brightly, but Umbridge acts as though she can barely understand him. As she makes notes, she narrates that Hagrid uses "crude sign language" and has a poor memory, which flusters Hagrid. Hagrid introduces one thestral, and when Umbridge notes that the Ministry believes thestrals are dangerous, Hagrid chuckles. Umbridge writes that Hagrid takes pleasure in violence and danger.

Umbridge announces and mimes that she's going to speak to students about Hagrid while Hagrid teaches. Pansy Parkinson tells Umbridge loudly that Hagrid's speech sounds like grunting, while Umbridge leads Neville to say that he's afraid of Hagrid. Pleased, Umbridge slowly and loudly tells Hagrid when he'll receive his inspection results and leaves. Hermione is beside herself and believes that Umbridge is going after Hagrid because he's half-giant. She says the thestral lesson was surprisingly good for Hagrid and says she wishes she could see the thestrals. She then takes this back when she realizes what she implied—that she wishes she had seen someone die.

In December, Ron complains about having to supervise decorating the castle and Hermione laments that she hasn't had time to knit elf hats. Harry doesn't tell her that Dobby is taking all of them. He thinks that for the first time ever, he wants to spend Christmas away from Hogwarts. Harry's spirits lift when Ron tells him that he's coming to the Burrow, the Weasleys' home, with him. Harry still feels guilty that Sirius will spend Christmas alone.

Here, Hagrid is able to validate Harry's lived experience in an extremely meaningful way by giving him proof that he's not crazy. This in turn allows Harry to gain more confidence in his own story and experience, and in the future, will help him be able to believe his own intuition.



Notice that at this point, Harry expresses little curiosity as to whom Neville saw die. This shows that Harry is still caught up in his own life and his own problems. Umbridge's act of treating Hagrid as though he's unintelligent and not fluent in English is a way for her to show him that she doesn't think he belongs—and to use her own prejudices, and those of others, to remove him from his relative position of power as a teacher. Hagrid doesn't know that Umbridge is fundamentally biased against him, so he doesn't try to defend himself and falls for her cruel traps.



Umbridge again shows her blatant racism, treating Hagrid like an animal to denigrate and embarrass him in front of his own students. While Hermione's comment about wanting to see the thestrals may not have been in good taste, she does have genuine curiosity about them.



Harry cares about many people, but doesn't know how support himself, the Weasleys, and Sirius at the same time.



When Harry arrives at the Room of Requirement for the final D.A. meeting before the holiday, he discovers that Dobby decorated the room with pictures of Harry's face. Luna arrives just as Harry takes the last ones down. Angelina arrives a minute later and tells Harry that Ginny is Gryffindor's new Seeker. When everyone is there, Harry announces that they'll review everything they've learned. With pride, Harry notes how much everyone has improved and says that after the break, they can start on more advanced magic.

After everyone clears out, Harry and Cho are the last two in the room. Harry turns around to see her crying, and she says that she wonders if Cedric knew all of these spells. Harry assures her that Cedric did, but Voldemort killed him anyway. Feeling miserable, Harry notices that Cho still looks pretty. Then she comments on the mistletoe, tells Harry she likes him, and kisses him. Harry makes it to the Gryffindor common room a half hour later. He's in such a state of shock that he can't tell Hermione and Ron what happened. When Harry confirms that they kissed, Ron laughs and Harry starts to smile.

Harry notes that Cho was crying and wonders if he's bad at kissing, but without looking up from her letter Hermione says that Cho spends most of her time crying lately. When Ron and Harry look confused, Hermione explains that Cho likely feels sad that Cedric died, guilty about liking Harry, is worried about rumors, and fears being kicked off the Quidditch team. Ron insists it's impossible to feel so much at once and Hermione glares at him. She asks Harry if he's going to ask Cho out, which makes Harry nervous.

When Ron asks, Hermione admits she's writing to Viktor Krum. They all sit for another twenty minutes before Hermione excuses herself. Ron grumpily wonders what Hermione sees in Krum, and Harry decides to ask Cho out when he sees her again. Harry falls asleep and dreams he's back in the D.A. room, arguing with Cho, but then the dream changes and Harry is a snake gliding along a stone floor. He sees a man sleeping at the end of a corridor. When the man notices Harry, Harry bites the man until he falls to the ground in a pool of blood.

Harry wakes up, sweaty and with his scar burning. Ron looks frightened, and Harry tells Ron that Mr. Weasley—who was the man—has been attacked. Neville runs for help. Harry vomits and insists that what he saw was real. McGonagall arrives and Harry tells her that a snake attacked Mr. Weasley. She looks at him with horror, and when Harry insists he isn't lying or crazy, McGonagall says she believes him and takes him to Dumbledore.

It's important that Harry recognizes how essential it is that the D.A. members learn the basics before they move onto advanced things. This shows that he's taking what he learned from the Order to heart: that basic maintenance and knowledge acquisition are even more important than showy displays of heroism.



Though Harry is young and rather oblivious to others' emotions—and so would likely find Cho's emotions confusing anyway—it's possible that her behavior around him is even more inscrutable because of Harry's own precarious emotional state at this point. This is especially the case because they share trauma surrounding Cedric Diggory's death, but in entirely different contexts. Harry actually saw Cedric killed, while Cho was dating him at the time.



Harry and Ron's confusion about what Cho is feeling reminds the reader that being able to interpret and appropriately respond to another person's emotions is a learned skill, not knowledge that everyone is born with. This reinforces that the boys are still in the early stages of coming of age emotionally and romantically—hopefully, they'll improve and become more empathetic as they grow. It also shows how emotionally intelligent Hermione is at this point, especially in comparison to her two male best friends.



By talking to each other about Krum and romance, Harry and Ron attempt to grow and learn together. This dramatic dream marks a major change in Harry's ability to seemingly share Voldemort's emotions, but it remains to be seen if the adults he trusts will believe him about the dream or dismiss him, as they have previously.



Harry's reaction upon waking suggests that committing violence, even in a dream, can be just as traumatizing as being the victim of violence. McGonagall telling Harry that she believes him is probably the best thing she can do for him in this situation, as it encourages Harry to take this seriously and believe himself.



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

McGonagall tells Ron to come too and leads the boys to Dumbledore's office. Harry tries not to panic as he tells Dumbledore what he saw. He also tries to curb his irritation with Dumbledore, as Dumbledore still won't look directly at him. When Dumbledore learns that Harry saw this happen from the snake's perspective, he calls on two sleeping headmasters' portraits and sends them to raise the alarm where Mr. Weasley is. He then sends Fawkes away, saying they'll need "a warning." Dumbledore pulls out one of his small silver instruments and when he taps it, its puffs of steam turn into a snake and then into two snakes.

One of the headmasters returns and says that people just took Mr. Weasley to St. Mungo's hospital. Dumbledore then sends McGonagall to get the other Weasley children. He turns an old kettle into a Portkey, wakes the portrait of a man named Phineas, and sends him to his portrait in Grimmauld Place to alert Sirius that Harry and the Weasley children will be there soon. Ginny, Fred, and George arrive, and Dumbledore explains that Mr. Weasley was injured in his work for the Order. When one of Fawkes's feathers drops into the room, Dumbledore instructs them to touch the kettle. As Harry looks at Dumbledore, they finally lock eyes and he suddenly feels searing hatred and a desire to bite him. The sensation disappears as the Portkey carries Harry away.

Harry falls to his knees as he arrives in the kitchen of Grimmauld Place. Sirius angrily shouts Kreacher to leave and approaches his guests with concern. Harry tells everyone what he saw, but he tells the story as though he saw it happen from the sidelines, not from the snake's perspective. Fred, George, and Ginny insist they need to go to St. Mungo's immediately, but Sirius insists they can't—Mrs. Weasley doesn't know yet, it would jeopardize the Order, and it would raise Ministry suspicions about Harry if they knew he was having visions. He says that Mr. Weasley knew what he was getting into when he joined the Order, but Fred shouts that it's easy for Sirius to say that, since he's not risking his life. Sirius composes himself, summons butterbeer, and insists they stay.

Harry feels incredibly guilty as they all sit together in silence. He reasons that though he made sure Mr. Weasley was found, they'd all be asleep if he hadn't had the vision. He tries to tell himself that he didn't actually attack Mr. Weasley, but he's afraid of what happened in Dumbledore's office too. A while later, one of Fawkes's feathers appears. It's a note from Mrs. Weasley saying that Mr. Weasley is alive and to stay put. Everyone remains at the kitchen table until Mrs. Weasley walks in a little after five in the morning. She says that Mr. Weasley is going to be okay. They can visit him later.

Dumbledore's unwillingness to look at Harry or tell Harry anything useful about what just happened means that Harry feels ignored and like he's just a messenger, not someone experiencing an identity crisis and a terrifying interlude as a violent snake. Harry also doesn't understand why Dumbledore is ignoring him. Though he'll later learn that Dumbledore is doing this for Harry's own good, it becomes clear here that Dumbledore's intentions don't make Harry feel any better right now.



Dumbledore confirms that Mr. Weasley was doing work for the Order when the snake attacked him—and Mr. Weasley was asleep. This suggests that even though whatever Mr. Weasley is doing is certainly important and worthwhile, that doesn't mean it's not boring enough to fall asleep on the job. The frightening impulse Harry feels when he finally meets Dumbledore's eyes suggests a reason for why Dumbledore has been purposefully ignoring him, but Harry doesn't get any more information about this and so is left feeling even more alone.



In this situation, Sirius has to act as a parent figure and impress upon the Weasley children that the most important thing right now is keeping the Order a secret. Because Sirius has acted more as a peer than an adult authority figure, this is more difficult for him to do—and Fred feels able to fire back with his comment that Sirius isn't doing anything meaningful. His words strike at Sirius's insecurities about being stuck inside the house and not really being useful to anyone. This is also later revealed to be the moment Kreacher first leaves the house, taking Sirius's command to get out literally.



Again, Harry's guilt in this situation stems from the fact that Dumbledore chose not to sit Harry down and tell Harry what's actually going on with his visions and dreams. Doing so would reveal to Harry that he's not actually doing anything wrong; he has a connection with Voldemort that sometimes causes him to feel what Voldemort is feeling.



Sirius and Harry busy themselves making breakfast and Harry dreads the moment that Mrs. Weasley asks him to recount his vision. However, when she enters she grips him in a hug and thanks him. She then turns to Sirius and asks if they can stay at the house through Christmas, which seems to thrill Sirius. Harry then calls Sirius aside and privately tells him the truth about his vision of being the snake. Sirius believes that Dumbledore would've said something if he were worried, and he also seems unconcerned about Harry's brief desire to attack Dumbledore. Sirius sends Harry to bed after breakfast, insisting that he's just in shock.

Harry goes to bed, but he stays awake, as he's afraid he'll attack someone else in his sleep. Tonks, Moody, and the children's trunks arrive around lunchtime and after they change into Muggle clothes, they all head for St. Mungo's. Moody stops the group in front of a rundown department store, and they all walk through the window glass. Harry finds himself in a waiting room and follows Mrs. Weasley to Mr. Weasley's ward, the "dangerous" ward for "serious bites." Harry tries to hang back with Tonks and Moody, but Mrs. Weasley pulls him into the room along with the family.

Mr. Weasley is cheerful and says he feels fine, but he bleeds profusely every time they take the bandages off. He motions to another man in the ward who was bitten by a werewolf. This concerns Mrs. Weasley, who fears for their safety, but Mr. Weasley reminds her that it's two weeks until the full moon. He says he mentioned that he knows a werewolf who lives a normal life, but the bitten man wasn't interested in hearing this. Fred and George try to ask what happened to Mr. Weasley. He refuses to say, and instead offers that they discovered that a man named Willy Widdershins was behind the regurgitating toilets, but he wasn't convicted.

Mrs. Weasley herds the children out and lets Tonks and Moody in, closing the door behind them. Fred and George find Extendable Ears and offer one to Harry. The adults discuss that nobody could find the snake and that Dumbledore has been acting like he expected Harry to see something like this. Moody growls that Voldemort is possessing Harry, and when he hears that, Harry yanks the Extendable Ear out of his own.

Sirius's lack of concern makes Harry feel even worse, which shows again that Sirius's intention doesn't matter (as he's probably trying to make Harry stop worrying about what happened so he can get some rest); the fact remains that it makes Harry feel alone and afraid of his own mind. Harry thus continues to question his experiences, his sanity, and whether he's even in control of his own mind—all things that make him vulnerable to manipulation.



The fact that Harry is afraid of attacking someone else speaks to how little he knows about what's going on and how his visions function. His fear is valid given what he knows, but he's not the one attacking people and isn't at all dangerous to his friends. This sense of guilt makes Harry want to withdraw and not be a part of the family when they visit Mr. Weasley.



It's telling that Mrs. Weasley is so concerned about a werewolf in a monitored, contained hospital setting when she sits with the werewolf Lupin at every Order meeting. This suggests that a fear of werewolves is something that runs deep in society, and even a wholly positive character like Mrs. Weasley can share these troubling views.



While learning that Voldemort might be possessing him is bad enough, another devastating piece of information for Harry is that Dumbledore has been expecting something like this, but hasn't let Harry in on that detail. This makes Harry feel even more isolated and like the adults he trusts won't look out for him, as he should be able to expect them to.



CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Harry feels dirty and tainted by Voldemort. He wonders if Dumbledore won't look at him because he expects to see Voldemort in his eyes. Harry wonders if he is the "weapon" the Order is trying to keep from Voldemort, and thinks that he *did* attack Mr. Weasley. Mrs. Weasley sends Harry to bed when they get home, but Harry tries not to sleep. He wonders if Voldemort is an Animagus and if they both transform when Voldemort possesses him. Panicking suddenly, Harry realizes that if Voldemort is possessing him, he needs to leave Grimmauld Place to protect the Order and Hogwarts to protect his classmates. He begins to pack his trunk, but the portrait of Phineas in Harry's bedroom lazily taunts him and then gives him a message from Dumbledore: stay put.

Suddenly, Harry is extremely angry. He shouts that all anyone tells him is to stay put and let the adults sort it out. Phineas says he hated teaching because of kids like Harry, points out that Dumbledore has always kept Harry safe, and says that Harry is stupid for thinking that he's the only one clever enough to figure out what Voldemort is planning. Harry lies down on his bed, afraid to sleep, but he falls asleep and again finds himself walking down a dark corridor in pursuit of something. Harry stays in bed all night, half awake, feeling unclear.

Harry stays in his room until the next evening while everyone else decorates for Christmas. He's with Buckbeak when Hermione arrives and explains that skiing wasn't fun, so she ended her trip with her parents early. Harry follows her to the second floor where Ron and Ginny are waiting. Harry angrily says he doesn't want to talk, but Ginny points out that she's been possessed by Voldemort and can tell Harry how it feels. When Ginny learns that Harry doesn't have any blanks in his memory, she declares that Voldemort hasn't possessed him. Hermione also notes that Voldemort can't move Harry in and out of Hogwarts, all of which is comforting for Harry.

Sirius throws himself into making Christmas a holiday to remember. On Christmas morning, Fred and George tell Ron and Harry that Mrs. Weasley is crying because Percy sent back the sweater she knitted for him. Harry and Ron accompany Hermione to the boiler room so she can give Kreacher a patchwork quilt, but he isn't there. Harry notices that Kreacher has saved some of the family photos. Sirius and the trio discuss the fact that nobody has seen Kreacher for a few days, and Harry asks if Kreacher left the house. Sirius isn't concerned.

Note how strong Harry's instinct is to protect the people and the causes he loves, even at his own risk. This reminds the reader that Harry is someone who cares deeply for others and at times, is able to care more for others than for his own happiness or comfort. That Dumbledore is sending messages through portraits, not in his own words, gives Harry what feels like even more proof that Dumbledore doesn't truly care about him or want to share any useful information with him.



Harry's anger is understandable, though it also comes out similarly to the typical teenage angst that Phineas mocks. Even if this is something that requires the adults to truly deal with the aftermath, not giving Harry any insight into what's happening to his mind and body means that Harry won't be able to appropriately interpret his experiences in the future.



Though it's impossible for Harry's peers to truly interpret what's happening in his mind, Ginny and Hermione show here that they're not entirely useless when it comes to helping Harry make sense of his experiences. This impresses on Harry the importance of asking at least his peers for help, as they have more information and insight into how things work than Harry often gives them credit for.



Again, Harry's concern about Kreacher will later turn out to be correct—but because he's a child suggesting things to knowledgeable adults, his questions aren't taken seriously. Even beloved and trustworthy adults like Sirius can devalue information from others as Harry and young people are.



After lunch, everyone goes to St. Mungo's to visit Mr. Weasley. Mr. Weasley seems strangely hearty and Mrs. Weasley looks suspiciously at his fresh bandages. He finally explains that the trainee Healer suggested they experiment with stitches—a Muggle treatment. The children excuse themselves as Mrs. Weasley learns what stitches are and starts to shout. Harry, Ron, and Hermione head for the tearoom, but on the fourth-floor landing, they come face to face with Professor Lockhart. He offers them his autograph but doesn't remember teaching at Hogwarts. A motherly Healer guides him back to his ward and invites the trio to stop in for a real visit.

The Healer settles them all in Lockhart's ward next to Broderick Bode, who she says is improving but not yet speaking. Lockhart starts to sign photos of himself as the Healer gives Bode a potted plant. Harry then spins around and sees Neville and his gran. Harry realizes that it must be Neville's parents in the end beds and tries to stop Ron, but Ron greets Neville brightly. Neville's grandmother greets the trio as well, but when she learns that they don't know about Neville's parents, she insists that he should be proud that they sacrificed themselves. Alice Longbottom shuffles forward and gives Neville a gum wrapper. He looks defiantly at Harry, Ron, and Hermione and then slips the wrapper into his pocket. After Neville and his gran leave, Harry heavily explains that Bellatrix Lestrange tortured the Longbottoms into insanity.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Sirius finds Kreacher in the attic, but Harry is uneasy, since Kreacher seems strangely docile. Sirius becomes more and more sullen and Harry isn't excited to leave him alone and return to Hogwarts and Umbridge. On the last day before the children return to Hogwarts, Mrs. Weasley calls Harry to the kitchen to speak to Snape. Sirius is there as well, and both men look furious. Snape taunts Sirius about not being able to do anything useful, and then tells Harry that Dumbledore wants him to teach Harry Occlumency, which will protect Harry's mind against "external penetration." Harry wonders what he did to deserve private lessons with Snape.

Sirius tells Snape that if he gives Harry a hard time, Sirius will know about it. The two argue about whether Snape has truly reformed and Sirius's choice to accompany Harry to King's Cross. Harry puts himself between the two angry men as the Weasley family walks happily into the kitchen. Snape lowers his wand and leaves, while Sirius turns his attention to congratulating Mr. Weasley on his recovery. That evening, Harry isn't able to comfort Sirius at all.

Inadvertently with Professor Lockhart is a callback to the second book, and reinforces for Harry, Ron, and Hermione that their world isn't actually as large as they might think—their lives are entwined with others in unexpected ways, and they cannot move through the world expecting to be entirely anonymous. As usual, Mr. Weasley's fascination with Muggles is treated humorously, though here it backfires and negatively affects his health.



In this tragic scene, the reality of war's aftermath becomes abundantly clear, as Neville must live with parents who can no longer care for him or even function because of the role they played in fighting Voldemort. Neville also clearly processes his trauma by staying silent and keeping his experience a secret. This makes him feel secure, but it also possibly prevents him from receiving help and support from others. The brief mention of Bode and the potted plant will become important later.



The order to take private Occlumency lessons from Snape appears, to Harry, to be another snub from Dumbledore, given that Dumbledore is aware that neither Harry nor Snape like each other. Dumbledore is thus forcing Harry to do something that he knows he will hate, without giving enough background as to why Harry has to do this.



Harry is forced to act like the only adult in this situation and separate Snape and Sirius, which makes Harry feel as though he has to be mature and shouldn't give Sirius a reason to worry. This in turn means that because Harry feels he needs to shield Sirius, he'll be less likely to ask Sirius for help if he needs it.



The next morning, Sirius pulls Harry aside and gives him a wrapped package. He says it's a way to communicate so that Harry can tell him if Snape's being horrible, but Harry knows that to keep Sirius safe, he can't use it. Sirius, Mrs. Weasley, and Mr. Weasley wave the children out the door with Lupin and Tonks and Lupin summons the Knight Bus. Harry, Ron, and Hermione sit on the top level of the bus with Tonks and barely manage to keep their seats as the bus leaps around the country. Finally, it arrives in Hogsmeade and drops them at the gate to Hogwarts. As Lupin tells Harry goodbye, he says that Snape is great at Occlumency and can teach Harry to protect himself.

Snape is awful to Harry in Potions. Harry feels even worse when Zacharias Smith acts superior because Harry has to tell him that he has Remedial Potions, Snape's cover story for Harry's extra lessons. When Cho approaches Harry in the hallway, Hermione drags Ron away. They awkwardly discuss their holidays and it takes Harry a minute to understand why Cho mentions the Valentine's Day Hogsmeade trip. He asks her to go to Hogsmeade with him.

Harry knocks on Snape's door later that evening. As they begin, Snape tells Harry about Occlumency, which seals a person's mind, and about Legilimency, the ability to "extract feelings and memories" from another's mind. Snape explains that Voldemort is skilled at this, and while a person usually needs eye contact to perform Legilimency, Harry and Voldemort seem to be connected to each other when Harry is asleep and vulnerable. He says that Voldemort now seems aware of this connection. Harry begs Snape for more information, but Snape refuses to tell Harry anything except that Dumbledore wants Harry to be able to protect himself in case Voldemort tries to access Harry's thoughts or make him do things.

Turning to the Pensieve on his desk, Snape pulls a few thoughts out of his head and puts them in the basin. He then asks Harry to draw his wand and do whatever he can to defend himself while he tries to break into Harry's mind. When Snape says "Legilimens," Harry is unable to fight and sees childhood memories flash through his head. When a memory of kissing Cho flashes through, Harry panics and produces an inadvertent Stinging Hex. Snape tells Harry to close his eyes and empty his mind before trying again. Harry sees the memory of Cedric dying before he throws Snape off again. Snape snarls that Harry needs to discipline his mind. As Harry's memories flash through again, he sees one of running with Mr. Weasley to his hearing.

As expected, Harry now feels as though he has to shut himself off from asking Sirius for help in order to keep Sirius safe, something that Harry shouldn't feel compelled to do. When Lupin also supports Harry learning Occlumency from Snape, it makes Harry feel as though there's something he doesn't know or understand about this situation, given that Lupin and Snape don't have a positive relationship either.



Even if Snape is doing Harry a favor according to Dumbledore and Lupin, his choice to create a cover story that makes Harry a joke among his classmates tells Harry that this isn't going to change anything between them or improve their relationship.



Notice that while Harry doesn't like or trust Snape, the fact that Snape is literally the only adult in Harry's life who's willing to give him reasonable information about what's happening to him means that Harry is dying to know more. While Snape isn't actually double agent here, this shows that Harry's desire for information is so great, he could be willing to trust people he really shouldn't as he searches for more information from people willing to share.



While the reader, like Hermione, knows that Dumbledore likely has a very good reason for Harry to be learning Occlumency from Snape, the fact remains that this is clearly a traumatizing experience for Harry. Snape is invading Harry's privacy and when the memory of Cedric flashes through, it forces Harry to relive the evening in the graveyard yet again. None of this makes it easier for Harry to learn what he's supposed to be learning, which suggests that trust and a safe environment are essential to education.



Harry triumphantly says that he figured it out, and Snape stares at him curiously. Harry realizes the corridor he's been dreaming about is in the Department of Mysteries. He asks Snape what's there. Snape looks unnerved and refuses to say, and he tells Harry to return on Wednesday. Harry finds Ron and Hermione in the library and tells them that whatever Voldemort's after, it's in the Department of Mysteries. They realize that that's where Sturgis Podmore was likely trying to break in, and Ron says that according to Mr. Weasley, nobody knows what the people who work there do.

Hermione and Ron lead Harry back to the common room, where Fred and George demonstrate their new Headless Hats. The hats impress Hermione, but Harry still feels ill after the Occlumency lesson and decides to go to bed. After taking a step inside of the dormitory, Harry suddenly feels like his head is being sliced in two and he hears maniacal laughter. He comes to on the floor, Ron next to him. Harry says that Voldemort is happy; something good has happened.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

At breakfast the next morning, Hermione yelps when she opens her *Daily Prophet*. She shows Harry and Ron the front page, which shows nine escaped prisoners from Azkaban, including Bellatrix Lestrange. The article says that Fudge thinks this breakout is connected to Sirius, which angers Harry. Hermione points out that Fudge is stuck; he can't walk back his attempts to discredit Harry and Dumbledore now. Hermione also finds an article saying that Broderick Bode, who used to work in the Department of Mysteries, died in St. Mungo's when a cutting of a Devil's Snare plant choked him. They realize they saw Bode and the plant, and Harry feels responsible. Hermione says this was clearly murder and runs off to send a letter.

Ron hails down Hagrid, who has new cuts and bruises. Hagrid mumbles that he's on probation and trudges off. Most of the other students don't seem to care. The students discuss the escaped Death Eaters often, and those who had family members killed by the Death Eaters get so much attention that they start to openly sympathize with Harry. Many students also start to look at Harry with curiosity instead of hostility. The teachers can't comfort the students, as Umbridge passes a decree saying that teachers can't talk to students about anything other than the subjects they teach. Umbridge herself seems even more intent on controlling things at Hogwarts.

The fact that Snape is uncomfortable with Harry's question tells Harry that it likely has to do with the Order, and isn't something that non-members can or should know about. Because nobody in the general public knows what's in the Department of Mysteries or what employees there do, Harry is again unable to effectively figure things out—and instead, must come to his own questionable conclusions.



Hermione's willingness to admit that Fred and George are skilled wizards shows that wizards don't actually need high test scores to create interesting, successful things. Harry's insight into Voldemort's mental state shows him clearly that his Occlumency lesson wasn't effective. The fact that Voldemort is so delighted is also extremely ominous.



Harry's sense of feeling responsible for Broderick Bode's death, since they saw the offending plant arrive in his ward, speaks to the way that Harry feels responsible for his fellow humans and wants to care for them the best he can. While this shows that Harry is a good and kind person, it also suggests that Harry is taking on too much emotional work and because of that, might be more overwhelmed by things than he really should be. This mass breakout from Azkaban also shows Voldemort's growing strength, while Fudge continues to deny the truth and allow Voldemort to consolidate even more power.



The new interest in Harry suggests that when there's little other information that seems reliable (Harry knows that the Daily Prophet article about the breakout is nonsense), people will naturally start to turn to what seems to better explain their reality—in this case, Harry. By forbidding the teachers from speaking to students about this, Umbridge creates an environment of fear and not knowing. This does mean, however, that students are even more likely to turn to Harry.



Umbridge now supervises all of Harry's Divination and Care of Magical Creatures lessons. Both Trelawney and Hagrid seem nervous and jumpy, and Hagrid forbids the trio from visiting him. The only thing that makes Harry happy is the D.A. The members work even harder after the Death Eaters' escape, and Neville becomes one of the most accomplished students. Occlumency, however, continues to go poorly. Harry's scar hurts often and he regularly feels happiness or anger that's not his own. He also dreams about the Department of Mysteries nightly. Ron suggests that Snape might be trying to open Harry up for Voldemort, but Hermione shoots this down and says they must trust Dumbledore.

On the morning of Valentine's Day, Hermione receives a letter at breakfast and asks Harry to meet her in Hogsmeade around midday and to bring Cho if he has to. Ron stays at school for Quidditch practice while Harry meets Cho in the entrance hall. They talk about Quidditch all the way down to the village until Pansy Parkinson walks by and shouts that Cedric was at least handsome. Harry and Cho awkwardly wander through shops. They remark that nobody's looking for the escaped Death Eaters like people looked for Sirius a few years ago.

Cho leads Harry to a steamy teashop decorated for Valentine's Day with cherubs, confetti, and bows. They order coffees and Harry watches another couple making out, feeling wildly uncomfortable. Cho and Harry discuss Umbridge, and then Harry invites her to come to the Three Broomsticks to meet Hermione in a bit. Cho looks suddenly cold, moves her hand away from Harry's, and begins to talk about Cedric and another boy. Harry tries to change the subject, which makes Cho cry. She accuses Harry of wanting to date Hermione, and though Harry feels relieved to learn why she's behaving like this, Cho dramatically leaves the shop. Harry pays and leaves.

In the Three Broomsticks, Harry runs into Hagrid. Hagrid morosely says that both of them are outsiders and orphans, and he says that family is important. When Harry asks about his injuries, Hagrid says they're part of his job and leaves. Harry moves over to Hermione's table, where Luna and Rita Skeeter are also sitting. Rita tries to ask Harry about his date with Cho and if he still believes that Voldemort is back. Hermione says that she wants Rita to write about Harry's version of events and name the active Death Eaters, to be published in *The Quibbler*. Hermione says in a level voice that the *Prophet* won't print it, and she believes publishing the story anywhere is better than keeping silent. Rita grudgingly agrees.

As has been the case previously, Harry continues to realize that quiet rebellion like the D.A. can be just as meaningful and impactful as something more obviously "heroic." Harry's recurring dreams about the Department of Mysteries indicate that whatever good intentions might be at play in the requirement that Harry learn Occlumency, the lessons aren't working—and Harry is becoming even more connected to Voldemort as a result.



Though Cho doesn't know that Sirius is innocent, it's telling that she recognizes that Sirius and the escaped Death Eaters are being held to different standards after their escape. Hermione isn't the only student at Hogwarts capable of interpreting the information around her critically.



This is another situation in which having all available and pertinent information would be extremely useful: Cho should know that Hermione is just a friend, and Harry could have salvaged the situation if he knew that this information is what Cho was looking for. As it is, he still has a lot to learn about interpreting others' words and actions.



Hermione's desire to publish Harry's truth in The Quibbler shows that she understands now that speaking out is something that will be both healing for Harry and essential to the safety of the rest of the Wizarding world. By pulling in Rita Skeeter to write the article, Hermione also shows that she's willing to look past her dislike and her distrust of Rita to get what she needs. This is broadly applicable in many situations and offers an example of coming together for a common goal despite differences.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Harry doesn't find the interview easy, but he thinks it's the best chance he has to get the truth out. Dean and Neville reassure Harry at dinner while Seamus tries to catch Harry's eye. Harry tells Hermione about his disastrous date with Cho, and Hermione patiently explains that Harry failed all of Cho's tests to see how much Harry likes her.

Seamus's attempts to catch Harry's eye suggest that he's coming around to believing Harry—something that he might have been trying to do for a while, but Harry just hadn't noticed. Once again, Hermione is much better at interpreting other people than Harry is, but she's patient with her sometimes-oblivious friends.



Up in the common room, Harry, Hermione, Fred, and George discuss the dismal state of the Gryffindor Quidditch team. George says that Ron can't save goals if anyone's watching and suggests that if Gryffindor loses the next match, he might have to kill Zacharias Smith (who plays on the Hufflepuff team). Hermione says that Quidditch just causes strife between the Houses, which earns her incredulous looks from the boys. The match is horrendous. Hufflepuff wins, but only by ten points because Ginny catches the Snitch. Harry goes to bed early and thinks of how Umbridge gloated at him during the match. This makes it hard to practice Occlumency, and Harry again dreams of reaching the door in the Department of Mysteries, but Ron snores and wakes Harry up.

Because Hermione listens and is able to reasonably interpret what she hears from a variety of different sources, she's also able to put inter-House Quidditch matches in the context of what the Sorting Hat warned them about at the beginning of the year. This then offers another example of the way in which Hogwarts is set up to encourage students to not see each other as allies, given that they're constantly in competition with each other for House points and in Quidditch matches.



On Monday morning, an owl brings Harry a copy of *The Quibbler* and others land with letters for him. Hermione and Ron help Harry open the letters. Some people think Harry is crazy, but others believe his story. Umbridge comes over to find out why Harry is getting so much mail, and her face turns violet when she sees his face on *The Quibbler*. She bans Harry from Hogsmeade, takes points from Gryffindor, and gives Harry a week of detention. Hours later, she puts up signs declaring her next educational degree, which bans *The Quibbler*. Hermione smiles and says that this will ensure that everyone will read the article.

*By censoring *The Quibbler*, Umbridge makes it extremely attractive to read it. This shows how attempts to silence someone can actually magnify their voice even more. The news that Harry is managing to convince wizards outside of his classmates at Hogwarts shows how meaningful and compelling it can be for someone like Harry to have the opportunity to tell their truth, while this validation also makes the punishment more bearable.*



Even though they're forbidden from mentioning *The Quibbler* to Harry, several professors give Harry extra points or sweets. Trelawney even predicts that Harry will live to old age. Both Cho and Seamus thank Harry and praise him, while Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle stay quiet—Harry named their fathers as Death Eaters, but they can't say anything without admitting they read *The Quibbler*. Fred and George throw a party in the common room that night, but Harry excuses himself to go to bed early.

Just as Harry is forced into under-the-radar rebellion with the D.A., teachers are now forced to engage in the same quiet resistance by praising Harry in these unassuming ways. It's telling that Harry still sees the Slytherins as fundamentally unknowable. While he's not entirely off-base, it's worth considering whether Harry could also find some important allies in Slytherin if he actually tried.



Harry dreams that he's in a dark room, looking at his long, white fingers. He interrogates a man named Rookwood about why Bode fought Lucius Malfoy's Imperius Curse and couldn't take "it." Harry sends Rookwood away and then looks at himself in a mirror. Voldemort's face stares back at Harry and Harry wakes up yelling. Harry tells Ron what he saw, and they realize that Bode was trying to remove the weapon. Ron is concerned that Harry saw himself as Voldemort and suggests he tell Dumbledore, but Harry refuses. When they tell Hermione about the dream the next day, Hermione says that this explains why someone killed Bode. She reasons that Sturgis was under the Imperius Curse too and tried to get the weapon. Then she scolds Harry for not practicing Occlumency.

A few weeks later, Harry is still no better at Occlumency. After he finds himself on the floor in Snape's office yet again, Snape scolds him for the dream in which he was Voldemort. He asks Harry if the dreams make him feel important, and then tells Harry that it's not his job to figure out what Voldemort is doing. He tries to get into Harry's mind again but this time, Harry reverses the spell. He enters Snape's memories and sees images of a man yelling at a woman while a boy cries, and others of girls laughing at young Snape. When Snape finally stops Harry, both Harry and Snape are white and sweaty. Harry knows he'll pay for this as Snape points his wand at Harry. Harry finds himself walking down the hallway again, but this time, the door opens and he enters. Snape is furious, but stops yelling when they hear screams.

Harry and Snape head for the entrance hall and Harry sees a crowd surrounding Trelawney. Her trunks are next to her and she shrieks with grief. Umbridge happily says that Trelawney is fired and needs to leave the premises. Trelawney starts to cry, but McGonagall comforts her. Dumbledore steps through the front doors and says that while he accepts that Umbridge can fire Trelawney, she can't kick Trelawney out. McGonagall, Sprout, and Flitwick escort Trelawney back upstairs and Dumbledore says he's already found a new Divination professor. He introduces the school to Firenze, a centaur.

Harry's refusal to share this dream with Dumbledore means that Harry, Ron, and Hermione are once again on their own to figure out what it means. While Harry now recognizes that he was actually sharing Voldemort's mind during this dream, just as he was the night that he dreamed of the snake attacking Mr. Weasley, Harry doesn't have any other meaningful information—such as what "it" is that Bode and Sturgis tried and failed to acquire for Voldemort.



While Snape has a point—it's the Order's job to figure out what Voldemort is up to, not Harry's—he still ignores the fact that since Harry has no reliable way of getting information about what's going on, the dreams are a way for him to at least get something, and so they seem appealing to him. As the trustworthy adults around Harry continue to ignore him, Harry isn't above turning elsewhere—in this case, to questionable mind-sharing with Voldemort—to get the information he wants.



Remember that according to an Educational Decree, Fudge can only appoint a teacher if Dumbledore can't find one himself. This means that Dumbledore knows how to read between the lines and pick out the pieces of law that do actually give him power, and use it wherever he can. Umbridge's delight in throwing Trelawney out reinforces how horrendous and evil she is, as she's happiest that she's causing Trelawney pain.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

A few days later, Parvati curls her lashes at the breakfast table in preparation for their first Divination lesson with Firenze. Hermione darkly says that Umbridge is going to get even nastier after Firenze's hiring, since she hates part-humans. Ron and Harry follow Parvati and Lavender to a classroom off of the great hall, which looks like a piece of the forest. As Firenze greets Harry, Harry notices a hoof-shaped bruise on the centaur's chest. Firenze greets the class and notes that he's no longer welcome in the Forbidden Forest. Dean asks if Hagrid breeds centaurs, but Firenze quietly and seriously says that centaurs aren't "playthings of humans." He explains that his herd banished him because they see working for Dumbledore as a betrayal.

Firenze asks the students to lie down and dims the light. Stars appear on the ceiling, and Parvati starts to point out how the arrangement of the planets causes burns and accidents. Firenze says this is nonsense. He says that centaur wisdom looks for events on a larger scale and mentions that centaurs have been tracking a coming war for a decade. He has the class burn sage to look for clues, but nobody sees anything. Harry is perplexed that Firenze's whole point seems to be that no knowledge is foolproof. When the bell rings, Firenze asks Harry to stay behind and tells him to pass on to Hagrid that his "attempt" isn't working. When Harry passes on Firenze's message, Hagrid seems offended.

The fifth years begin suffering from **O.W.L.** stress and the only thing that makes Harry happy are D.A. meetings. He introduces Patronuses one night and several students, including Seamus, experience success conjuring them. Suddenly Dobby enters the room, looking terrified. Harry ascertains that Umbridge found about the D.A. and sends everyone running. Harry races for a bathroom, but Malfoy hits him with a Trip Jinx. Umbridge comes around the corner, looking delighted. She walks Harry to Dumbledore's office.

Dumbledore's office is filled with people, including Fudge, McGonagall, Kingsley, and Percy. Fudge asks Harry if he knows why he's here. Harry catches Dumbledore's eye, sees him shake his head, and says he doesn't. Umbridge leaves and returns with Marietta, who hides her face in her hands. When she moves her hands, Harry sees "SNEAK" written in purple boils across her face. Fudge jumps in surprise and Marietta wails and covers her face again. She refuses to speak, so Umbridge says that Marietta told her about the D.A.

Dean's question, while asked in earnest, is nonetheless extremely offensive to Firenze. The fact that Dean didn't ask it to be mean reminds the reader that Dean hasn't grown up in the Wizarding world, knowing that centaurs are their own people with their own culture—he knows next to nothing about them. It's telling, then, that even a child like Dean has the ability and the willingness to learn to treat Firenze and centaurs with respect and kindness—unlike Umbridge, who should certainly know better.



Firenze offers a very different kind of wisdom than the human teachers at Hogwarts, but it is no less valuable. The fact that Firenze's lesson centers on the idea that no knowledge is foolproof suggests that in order to move through the world successfully, Harry should endeavor to acquire knowledge everywhere and every chance he gets—for only through looking at things holistically and from a variety of points of views will Harry be able to come to reasonable conclusions about the world.



Notice that it's Malfoy who catches Harry, not Umbridge. This shows that Umbridge is weaponizing the divisions already within the school so that she can gain control over the students she doesn't like. In doing so, she creates another hierarchy of students and exacerbates the issues the Sorting Hat mentioned in its song.



Umbridge's inability to empathize with Marietta and understand how embarrassing it must be to have "SNEAK" written in boils on her face shows again that Umbridge only wants her relationships with the students to flow one way: she wants them to serve her, and has little interest in taking their concerns, valid or otherwise, seriously.



Umbridge reminds the room that in the fall, Willy Widdershins reported to her that he heard Harry in the Hog's Head, setting up an illegal society. Dumbledore interrupts and points out that at the time, the society *wasn't* illegal. He asks for proof if the meetings have continued since then. Harry then hears Kingsley whisper and feels something brush against him. When Umbridge asks Marietta to tell them about the D.A. meetings, Marietta, whose eyes are strangely blank, says there haven't been any. Umbridge loses her temper and shakes Marietta, but Dumbledore draws his wand and Umbridge lets go as though she was burned. Umbridge composes herself and pulls out the member list of the D.A.

Fudge accepts the list and is shocked to see that the group is called Dumbledore's Army. Dumbledore says that he recruited the students himself and tonight was the first meeting. Fudge is furious, and Harry tries to stop Dumbledore when he realizes what Dumbledore is doing. Dumbledore remains calm as Fudge prepares to escort Dumbledore to Azkaban. With a smile, Dumbledore says he has no intention of going to Azkaban. When Fudge tells Kingsley to take Dumbledore, there are a few bangs, McGonagall yanks Harry to the ground, and he looks up to see everyone except Dumbledore unconscious. Harry tries to thank or apologize to Dumbledore, but Dumbledore tells Harry to practice Occlumency and touches Harry's arm. Harry again angrily wants to bite him as Dumbledore grabs Fawkes and disappears. Everyone else comes to and races after Dumbledore.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Notices go up overnight announcing that Umbridge is now the Headmistress. The students all seem to know that Dumbledore evaded Fudge, two Aurors, and Umbridge. Harry learns from Ernie that Dumbledore's office sealed itself against Umbridge. Malfoy interrupts and says that since he's part of the Inquisitorial Squad—a group of students who support the Ministry—he can take points from Harry and his friends for no reason. Harry watches rubies fly out of the Gryffindor hourglass in the entrance hall as Fred and George join them. They say that Montague tried to take points from them, but they forced him into a Vanishing Cabinet. The twins announce that they no longer care about getting into trouble and want to make Dumbledore proud.

Again, Umbridge's choice to shake and yell at Marietta shows that she doesn't actually care for students at all; she only cares about bringing the school under Ministry control, and is willing to use and abuse students when it suits her. Dumbledore, on the other hand, shows that he cares deeply and impartially for his students when he stops Umbridge from shaking Marietta. It's suggested that Kingsley discreetly wipes Marietta's memory here.



Dumbledore and Kingsley work together to put all the blame on Dumbledore and keep the students out of harm's way. Though Dumbledore's parting words to practice Occlumency should give Harry important information about what's going on and his role in it, the fact that once again, this is a quick meeting in which Dumbledore won't tell Harry anything that Harry wants to know keeps Harry from taking Dumbledore's request seriously. Dumbledore again refuses to include Harry in any of his planning or interpretations of what's going on in the world, so now, Harry feels even more alone with his departure.



Remember that Fred and George aren't at school to get good grades in class, necessarily; they're at school to fine-tune things for their joke shop. This means that they have little incentive to work hard to stay in school, which gives them immense freedom to do whatever they please to torment Umbridge. The fact that Dumbledore's office won't allow Umbridge in shows that Hogwarts is able to protect itself against infiltration to a degree—as far as it's concerned, Dumbledore is still the rightful headmaster of the school. At the same time, things are going even more horribly at Hogwarts now, as the school has basically become a dictatorship under Umbridge's total control.



As Ron, Harry, and Hermione enter the Great Hall, Filch grabs Harry to see Umbridge. Filch mutters about how excited he is to be able to punish students now and shoves Harry into Umbridge's office. Harry sits and tries to refuse her offer of a drink, but finally accepts tea. Umbridge makes a show of putting milk in it with her back to him. As Harry lifts the cup, he thinks of Moody and only pretends to drink. Umbridge starts asking Harry about where Dumbledore and Sirius are. He insists he doesn't know. She dismisses him with a warning that all communication is being monitored.

Harry and Umbridge then hear a loud noise and screams from downstairs. In the entrance hall, they find huge fireworks flying around—but they don't burn out, and seem to get bigger and multiply by the minute. Laughing, Harry ducks behind a tapestry and finds Fred and George hiding there. George laughs that he hopes Umbridge tries to Vanish them, as doing so makes them multiply. The teachers don't seem bothered and McGonagall and Flitwick refuse to attend to the rampant fireworks, so Umbridge spends her first day as headmistress putting them out. That evening, Hermione compliments the twins.

Harry crawls into bed later and immediately begins dreaming about the Department of Mysteries. The door opens, letting him into a circular room, and the door directly across from him opens too. Harry goes through another door until he's in a dark room with shelves of dusty glass orbs. Just as he reaches something he knows he wants, he wakes up angry, his scar hurting. Harry spends the next day feeling guilty, as he knows Snape will be angry. On his way to Snape's office, Cho stops Harry to try to defend Marietta. Harry is incredulous. They yell at each other and part ways.

Harry lies to Snape that he's been practicing, but before Snape can break into Harry's mind, Malfoy knocks and tells Snape that they found Montague and need help. As Harry prepares to follow Snape out of the office, he catches sight of the Pensieve and wonders what Snape has in there. Harry puts his head into the Pensieve and falls into the middle of the Great Hall. Students seem to be taking a test; they're writing furiously at individual desks. Harry locates teenage Snape and sees that he's taking his Defense Against the Dark Arts [O.W.L.](#) Harry also finds James, Sirius, Lupin, and Wormtail. James and Sirius are extremely handsome.

Moody has a habit of only drinking from a hip flask, which means he's less likely to be poisoned by an enemy. Harry's ability to think of this and take measures to protect himself shows that in times like this, he's able to draw on knowledge and examples from many people to come up with a plan. This is one of the things that, ideally, Harry would teach the D.A., as it's one of the less measureable things that make him successful.



By not putting out the fireworks, McGonagall and Flitwick quietly support Fred and George in their crusade and show again that resistance and supporting a rebellion doesn't need to happen in an especially obvious way. When Hermione compliments the twins, it shows that she's also coming to terms with the evidence showing that they don't need high test scores in order to be successful—the fireworks are proof of that.



Harry's choice to not forgive Cho and instead, to affirm his loyalty to his friends, Dumbledore, and the D.A. shows that at this point, Harry is too invested in his friendships and caring for those people than he is in trying to make a relationship with Cho work. Harry slowly gains more information through his dreams, but at this point it's likely that Voldemort is actively influencing him, rather than simply sharing an accidental connection.



Harry seems surprised to encounter his father in Snape's memory. This really shouldn't be a surprise for him, given that Snape is trying to keep thoughts from Harry he doesn't want him to see, and Harry knows that Snape loathes James and has since school. This shows how Harry's love of his father and his excitement at getting to see him in the flesh renders him unable to think critically about what he's seeing and why Snape didn't want him to see it.



A young Flitwick announces the end of the exam and releases the students. Harry tries to keep himself between Snape and James's friends as they all walk onto the grounds. Snape remains engrossed in the sheet of questions and sits on the grass. James and his friends sit under a beech tree, and James pulls out a Snitch he stole and starts playing with it. Wormtail watches openmouthed, but James seems more interested in impressing girls sitting by the lake. Sirius announces that he's bored, and James points out Snape. Sirius says, "Snivellus." Lupin keeps his eyes on his book as Snape and James draw their wands. James Disarms Snape, teases him about his greasy skin, and then conjures soap bubbles in Snape's mouth.

Lily appears and shouts at Sirius and James to leave Snape alone. James begins messing up his hair to impress her. She calls James a bully and James agrees to leave Snape alone if Lily goes out with him. Snape and James shoot curses at each other again, but James comes out on top: he turns Snape upside down to reveal his dirty underwear. Lily and James argue, and finally James lets Snape go. Snape calls Lily a Mudblood, saying he doesn't need her help. Lily insults James and walks off, and James turns Snape upside down again. Harry feels a hand on his arm and sees a furious adult Snape next to him. Snape yanks Harry out of the Pensieve, swears him to silence, and throws Harry out of his office. Harry is horrified by what he saw: his father was as arrogant and mean as Snape has always said he was.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Over the Easter holiday, Harry lies to Hermione that he no longer has Occlumency lessons because Snape thinks he's doing well. Harry pretends to study and dwells on what he saw in the Pensieve. Hagrid and Sirius have always told Harry that James was wonderful, but he can't imagine ever tormenting someone like James tormented Snape. He's also disturbed by Lily's clear hatred of James in the memory.

At the end of the holiday, Ginny finds Harry in the library to give him Mrs. Weasley's Easter package of chocolate eggs. The gift inexplicably makes a lump rise in Harry's throat and Ginny asks if Harry's okay. He says he'd like to talk to Sirius. Ginny says that they can figure something out, but then the librarian throws them out of the library. Back in the common room, Harry finds a notice listing appointments with McGonagall so she can give career counseling, along with pamphlets discussing possible jobs. Several jobs require high [N.E.W.T.](#) scores in a number of subjects.

James's behavior toward Snape is objectively cruel, awful, and unwarranted. This suggests that at least as a young man, James wasn't an especially kindhearted person, something that goes against everything that Harry has ever heard about his father. It's also worth noting that Lupin doesn't do anything to stop James and Sirius from bullying Snape, which makes him complicit as well. This also shows that the school's inter-House hatred isn't something new by any means.



Though Snape is a victim here, he's not entirely innocent—remember that "Mudblood" is an extremely offensive slur in the Wizarding world. This again shows Harry that not everyone is entirely good or entirely bad; one can be a victim who uses hateful language, and someone can also, like James, be a good person according to some people, but still have a questionable history as a bully. This experience in Snape's memory shakes up a huge part of what Harry previously took for granted—that his father was a hero, and Harry should be proud to be like him.



Now that Harry knows that James wasn't without faults, he can begin to decide how much like his father he'd like to be. Notably, Harry has this choice; he gets to actively choose what parts of his father to attempt to embody. He doesn't yet fully realize that he has this choice, however, and so feels crushed to have one of his idols destroyed in this way.



Though the novel never says so outright, students must achieve certain scores in their O.W.L.s in order to progress to the N.E.W.T. level. This means that all of the jobs that require high scores in Defense Against the Dark Arts will be nearly unattainable for non-D.A. fifth years, as they haven't had the training to be able to do well enough on the tests to earn high scores.



Fred and George interrupt Harry, Ron, and Hermione's perusal of the pamphlets to talk about arranging for Harry to talk to Sirius. George explains that once the break is over, they're going to start causing trouble and can create a diversion so Harry can use Umbridge's fireplace to talk to Sirius. Hermione is distraught, but Ron says that Harry can make his own choices. Fred promises Harry 20 minutes, and tells Ron where to find the diversion. The next day, Hermione spends every minute giving Harry dire warnings. Snape ignores Harry all through Potions, which Harry thinks is an improvement. When he takes a flask to Snape for grading, however, Snape "accidentally" drops Harry's potion and Harry discovers that Hermione already Vanished what was left in his cauldron.

Harry arrives late for his career appointment with McGonagall and finds Umbridge in the office as well. At McGonagall's prodding, Harry says he'd like to be an Auror. McGonagall tells Harry what he needs in terms of [O.W.L.s](#) and [N.E.W.T.s](#), including continuing with Potions, and ignores Umbridge's coughs. Umbridge finally interrupts and says that Harry doesn't have the temperament or good enough grades in Defense Against the Dark Arts. McGonagall says that despite Harry's poor marks from Umbridge, under "competent" professors he's done well. Umbridge scribbles furiously and says that with Harry's criminal record, he can't be an Auror. Growing angry, McGonagall says that she'll coach Harry personally to help him achieve the required results.

In Defense Against the Dark Arts later, Harry guiltily thinks of what McGonagall would say if she were to find out that he trespassed in Umbridge's office after vouching for him. Harry thinks of Sirius saying that he's not as much like James as Sirius thought, and wonders if he even wants to be like his father. As the bell rings, Harry hears a bang and he runs toward Umbridge's office. He slips on his Invisibility Cloak and uses a special knife from Sirius to unlock the door. He uses Floo powder to send his head to Grimmauld Place and finds Lupin in the kitchen. Lupin runs to fetch Sirius.

Harry tells them about what he saw in the Pensieve. Sirius and Lupin explain that Snape was jealous of James, but James was an arrogant jerk at age fifteen. Lupin admits that he never told Sirius and James to leave Snape alone, so it's his fault too. Sirius explains that James always showed off around Lily and that she didn't really hate him. They started dating in seventh year, after James stopped being so arrogant. Sirius tells Harry that James grew out of being an idiot. Then he asks how Snape reacted to Harry seeing his memory. They're concerned when Harry says Snape won't teach him Occlumency anymore, and tell Harry to go speak to Snape. Then they hear footsteps and Harry pulls his head out of the fire. He throws on the Cloak just as Filch enters and then follows Filch out of the office.

Ron's assertion that Harry can choose to speak to Sirius or not is one way that he can continue to show Harry his loyalty. While Hermione pesters Harry constantly about his decision—trying to keep him safe and counter Harry's impulsive nature—Ron treats Harry with surprising maturity. What Harry saw in the Pensieve makes Snape's hatred of James suddenly seem understandable, though it doesn't justify Snape's mistreatment of Harry, who shouldn't have to pay for his father's sins.



McGonagall shows here that when push comes to shove, she'll advocate for her students and help them achieve their goals, no matter who's in charge of the school. This behavior from McGonagall, combined with her earlier warnings to lay low and not be noticed, suggests that this is something that's extremely important to her—and something she's willing to spend all of her capital as a teacher to fight for. She lets her dislike of and disdain for Umbridge show here, but not to the point that she lets herself get fired—it's too important for her to stay and protect her students.



Harry's musings about whether he even wants to be like his father suggest that he's accepting that he does have a say over what kind of person he'll be in the future, no matter what his father was like. Having some context from Sirius and Lupin, however, will allow Harry to gather more information and make a better choice in regard to how he thinks of his father, and how he thinks of himself as his father's son.



Though Harry isn't able to get much important information over the course of the novel, understanding the kind of teenager James Potter was allows Harry to feel more secure and okay with the person his father was. In a larger sense, this scene also shows Rowling continue to complicate Harry's world as he grows up, with the novels themselves maturing in a sense along with their protagonist. In previous books James was presented as a saint-like hero, but now he is revealed to be just another human with very human flaws.



Harry pulls the Cloak off when he's far enough away and finds students covered in a stinky, gooey substance with Fred and George surrounded in the entrance hall. When Umbridge says that she's going to punish the twins, the twins Summon their broomsticks. They announce that students can buy a Portable Swamp like the one upstairs at Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes in Diagon Alley. They tell Peeves to torment Umbridge and then fly away, as all the students applaud.

Umbridge's anger implies that the Portable Swamp is no small or inconsequential thing, which again reminds the reader that the twins are smart and competent wizards, even without their test scores. Further, the fact that they must leave school after setting up the swamp shows that these grander acts of rebellion aren't sustainable in the long run, though this is still a satisfying and triumphant moment for the twins and for all those who hate Umbridge.



CHAPTER THIRTY

Fred and George leave no instructions as to how to get rid of their Portable Swamp, so Filch has to help students across every day. Filch also puts Harry's broomstick in the dungeons. Other students begin to torment Umbridge with Dungbombs, Stinkpellets, and releasing a niffler in Umbridge's office, while others eat sweets from Skiving Snackboxes in her classes and insist they have "Umbridge-itis." Harry also witnesses McGonagall telling Peeves how to unscrew a chandelier. In Charms one day, Ron laments that Mrs. Weasley will think that the twins' departure is his fault, and Harry admits that he gave them his Triwizard winnings. Ron is thrilled, and Harry agrees that he can tell Mrs. Weasley this.

Because the students band together to stand up to Umbridge, they're more difficult for Umbridge to punish. This speaks to the power of working together toward a common goal, and reinforces that there's safety in numbers in situations like this. These students aren't forced to dramatically leave school, like Fred and George were, because there's so many of them misbehaving. A common enemy also helps create a greater sense of unity in the school—students aren't competing with each other so much now that they're all fighting Umbridge.



After Charms, Hermione encourages Harry to go talk to Snape about Occlumency, but Harry refuses. He's still having the dreams of the room with the dusty orbs in the Department of Mysteries, and though he insists he tries to empty his mind, he's too curious about the room to try to stop the dreams. Unfortunately for Harry, with [O.W.L.s](#) approaching, he often dreams about exams.

Because Harry still doesn't know that the dreams are actually potentially dangerous, he sees no reason to stop them. This again shows how his ignorance means that he comes to trust and rely on something that's actually not trustworthy, simply because it makes him feel like he's actually learning something in his own way.



Harry and Hermione take their seats for the final Quidditch match of the season, hopeful that without Fred and George around to tease Ron, he'll play better. The Slytherins sing "Weasley is our King" as the match starts and the Slytherins score almost immediately. Hagrid appears behind Harry and asks him and Hermione to come with him, acting secretive. Looking at Hagrid's bloody nose, Harry and Hermione agree. Hagrid distractedly leads Harry and Hermione into the Forbidden Forest with his crossbow. He says that since Firenze left, the centaurs no longer welcome people, since they tried to kill Firenze and Hagrid saved him.

Hagrid walking into the forest armed shows Harry and Hermione that centaurs can be dangerous. The students are taught so little about them (and other non-human cultures) that their ignorance is dangerous, and further can lead to discrimination and prejudice against those they don't understand.



After a while, Hagrid stops. He tells Harry and Hermione that he's going to be fired any day now, and he needs them to promise to help him. Harry agrees outright, which makes Hagrid tear up, and then Hagrid leads them further. They creep quietly up to a smooth mound of earth, which Hermione and Harry soon realize is actually sleeping giant. Shrilly, Hermione says that the giant's been hurting Hagrid, but Hagrid says he had to bring Grawp back—he's his brother. The other giants were beating Grawp up because he's small, and though Grawp didn't want to come, Hagrid made him. Hermione calls Grawp violent and asks why Hagrid forced him. Harry notices that Grawp is tied up.

Hagrid says that he needs Harry, Hermione, and Ron to come and talk to Grawp and teach him English. Harry thinks of Firenze's warning that Hagrid's "attempt" isn't working and thinks this is hopeless. Harry wishes he hadn't already agreed to help, as Hagrid grabs a stick and pokes Grawp in the back. Grawp roars and stands up faster than Harry thought possible. He pulls a bird's nest out of a tree and turns it over, and then starts to pull back a tree. Hagrid pokes Grawp again and introduces Harry and "Hermy." Grawp tries to snatch Hermione and then knocks Hagrid over when Hagrid reprimands him. Hagrid leads Harry and Hermione back toward Hogwarts and Harry wonders how Hagrid could ever think it possible to civilize Grawp.

Hagrid stops suddenly as two centaurs, Magorian and Bane, step out of the trees. They accuse Hagrid of meddling and threaten to hurt him, but Magorian insists that they can't hurt Hagrid since he's accompanied by children. They warn Hagrid to not come back as Hermione pushes Hagrid toward the school. When Hermione suggests that they can't go into the forest with the centaurs behaving this way, Hagrid is dismissive and says that the centaurs won't hurt them. They hear cheering as they reach the edge of the forest and see that the match is over. Harry and Hermione discuss what Hagrid asked them to do, and Hermione angrily suggests that Umbridge is right to want to fire Hagrid for this. She apologizes as they start to hear lines of "Weasley is our King." Harry realizes that this time the words are different: Gryffindor is singing because they won.

The language that Hermione uses suggests that while she's been open to working with giants in the past and integrating them more into Wizarding society, she's actually just as afraid of giants as most other wizards are. Even someone like Hermione, who values diversity and wants non-human beings to have rights and recognition, isn't exempt from fearing beings that are different—even though it's possible that Grawp is only so violent because he doesn't want to be here.



All of Grawp's actions suggest that he's bored being tied up and angry to not be with his own kind—understandable sentiments. In this way, Grawp mirrors the way that Harry felt shut up at the Dursleys' house over the summer. Like Grawp, he was angry and looking for fights all the time, while he was also disinterested in speaking with his captors. This allows Harry to empathize with Grawp and see him as someone worthy of care and sympathy, while also showing that Hagrid's love for his brother is keeping him from making choices in Grawp's best interest.



Though Hagrid ignores it, Hermione is more than willing to accept the centaurs' ban on humans in the forest. This shows that she recognizes that they're the ones that control the land, and she has no right to trespass and no way of making sure she can do so safely regardless. Harry's insistence that they have to keep their promise to Hagrid shows that he recognizes that loyalty is one of the most important elements in a friendship like theirs. As he consistently does throughout the books, he places loyalty to his close friends above everything else, even his own safety.



CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

The next day, Hermione and Harry convince Ron to join them on the lawn so they can tell him about Grawp. Ron talks about his saves in the Quidditch match and ruffles his hair, which makes Harry grin—it's exactly what James did. Finally, Hermione tells Ron about Grawp. Ron is incredulous, and insists they have to break their promise to Hagrid. Over the next few days, professors stop assigning homework so the fifth years can study for their [O.W.L.s](#), and several students begin acting strangely. Ernie interrogates people about how many hours per day they study, while Malfoy insists that those students with connections at the Ministry will be favored by the examiners. Neville tells Harry this isn't true: his gran knows the head examiner and she wouldn't do that. Several students also try to buy stimulants, though Hermione confiscates what she can.

Their first [O.W.L.](#) is Charms. In the morning, the students file into the Great Hall and take the theoretical exam. They eat lunch and then, in the afternoon, take the practical exam. Harry's examiner seems thrilled to test him. The fifth years go through the same process for Transfiguration, Herbology, and Defense Against the Dark Arts. Harry's examiner for the Defense Against the Dark Arts practical offers him a bonus point for conjuring a Patronus, which makes Umbridge give Harry a nasty look.

Harry and Ron have Friday off while Hermione takes her Ancient Runes exam. She returns in a horrible temper; she mistranslated one word and someone put another niffler in Umbridge's office. She points out that Umbridge thinks Hagrid is doing it, and Umbridge won't care that Hagrid has an alibi. On Monday, they take their Potions [O.W.L.](#), and though Harry finds it difficult, both he and Neville do well in the practical without Snape making them nervous. Harry does his best in his Care of Magical Creatures exam so he can make Hagrid proud, but Divination the next afternoon is a disaster for both Harry and Ron.

Harry's ability to grin when Ron ruffles his hair like James did shows that he's beginning to come to terms with the person his father was as a teenager. Now, he can pick out the parts of his father that he admires or is charmed by, while still recognizing that James was a flawed person who used to be a bully. The strange behavior of people like Ernie reminds the reader that O.W.L.s are extremely stressful for students. Malfoy's insistence that connections lead to higher scores speaks to how he sees adult life working. Indeed, this seems to have worked out for him in the past, considering his extremely privileged life.



The grueling O.W.L. schedule continues to show, by its design, how important these exams are to their futures. Carving out this much time for exams means that students are required to throw themselves entirely into performing well and having things memorized. Harry's performance in the Defense Against the Dark Arts exam shows how much the D.A. has helped him—and how important a practical education is.



When Harry and Neville can perform reasonably well in Potions because Snape isn't there, it speaks to the power of a good teacher to help students succeed—and the power of a poor teacher to keep students from learning the material. Despite the evidence that Snape's behavior is mostly to blame for Harry's poor performance in his class, it's also worth noting that Harry seems to know enough of the material to do well, suggesting that Snape is an effective teacher in other ways.



The practical Astronomy O.W.L. is that evening on the Astronomy Tower. The students set up their telescopes and begin filling in their star charts. As Harry works, he notices several figures, including Umbridge, exiting the front doors. They go to Hagrid's hut and Hagrid lets them in. Harry pretends to concentrate as he hears a roar come from Hagrid's cabin. More loud noises emanate from the cabin and Harry sees the figures trying to Stun Hagrid. The students all watch with horror. Hagrid throws off a few of the people as McGonagall runs toward Hagrid. Four people Stun her at once she collapses, and Hagrid runs away into the forest. Shaken, Harry returns to his exam.

Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Ernie angrily discuss what happened to Hagrid and McGonagall. In the common room, they learn that Lee Jordan is responsible for the nifflers, and he feels guilty that they were blamed on Hagrid. They don't go to bed until four in the morning. Harry wakes up early so he can study for History of Magic, but it does little good. As he tries to remember the facts of a fight for troll rights, he falls asleep. He dreams he's walking through the Department of Mysteries. The dream seems normal until Harry gets to the room with the orbs—in this dream he sees Sirius. He tells Sirius to remove an orb in the 97th row, and performs the Cruciatus Curse on Sirius when he refuses. Harry wakes screaming.

The attack on Hagrid shows that Umbridge is now willing to try to arrest people (hence the accompaniment of what are presumably Aurors) in order to get her way at Hogwarts. This tells Harry that Fudge is moving to tighten his hold on the school even further after losing Dumbledore. By putting Hagrid in Azkaban or restraining him somehow, Fudge would make sure that Hagrid couldn't speak about what's happening at the school with others who could come to his aid. The Ministry (and its microcosm of Umbridge's regime at Hogwarts) increasingly shows its corruption and willingness to abuse its power.



Harry is seeing things from Voldemort's perspective in this dream, which allows Harry to feel as though the dream is actually happening in real time. While Harry believes the dream is true at the time, he later discovers it's a trap—Voldemort is manipulating him to try and lure him to come save Sirius. Indeed, many of his most recent dreams have been prepping him for this important play on Voldemort's part—now he knows how to get to the room with the orbs, which is exactly where Voldemort wants him to be. It's important to note that Harry is more vulnerable to this trap because he's so stressed and exhausted from the O.W.L. the night before, as once again the more mundane concerns of school mingle with the larger forces at work in Harry's life.



CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

The examiner helps Harry out of the Great Hall and offers to let him return to finish, but Harry insists that he's done. As soon as he's alone, he races to the hospital wing and asks to speak to McGonagall. Madam Pomfrey explains that McGonagall is in St. Mungo's, and Harry feels alone and terrified. He sprints to find Ron and Hermione and pulls them into a classroom. Hermione's face turns white when Harry tells her that Voldemort has Sirius in the Department of Mysteries and plans to kill him. Harry sits down and asks how they're going to get there to rescue Sirius.

For Harry, who has distrusted his teachers throughout the year and refused to go for help, seeking out McGonagall suggests that at least in extremely dire situations, Harry does understand the importance of asking for help. This makes it even more tragic that, as far as Harry is concerned, there's nobody else here to help him, as he gets no positive reinforcement and again feels that he's on his own.



Ron and Hermione look less convinced. Hermione wants to know how both Voldemort and Sirius, the two most wanted wizards in the country, got into the Ministry unnoticed. Ron, however, remembers Harry's dream of the snake biting Mr. Weasley and shifts to Harry's side. He suggests that since Regulus was a Death Eater, Sirius might know how to get the weapon. Hermione nervously points out that Harry likes to save people and Voldemort knows that Harry will want to save Sirius, so he could just be trying to lure Harry into a trap. Harry shouts that there's nobody else to ask for help, and refuses to believe that his dream was just a dream. He loses his temper with Hermione when she points out that both Dumbledore and Sirius wanted the dreams to stop.

Ginny and Luna walk in and ask if they can help. Harry rudely insists they can't, but Hermione says that they need to check if Sirius is home before they run to London. She suggests they use Umbridge's fire to contact him. Ron decides to tell Umbridge that Peeves is causing trouble, while Ginny and Luna decide to stand on either end of Umbridge's corridor to tell people someone let off Garroting Gas. Harry realizes this is a good plan, so he agrees and gets his Invisibility Cloak. Everyone takes their places and when the corridor is clear, Hermione and Harry sneak into the office. Harry sticks his head in the fire. When he's at Grimmauld Place, he shouts for Sirius. Kreacher is in the kitchen and delightedly says that Sirius is in the Department of Mysteries.

Suddenly Umbridge drags Harry's head back through the flames until he's back in her office. Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle enter, holding Ron, Ginny, Luna, and Neville. Umbridge insists that Harry was plotting something and then sends Malfoy to fetch Snape. Harry can't believe he forgot about Snape. Snape enters and tells Umbridge that he can't procure more Veritaserum. Harry meets Snape's eyes and wills him to understand. Umbridge shrieks that Snape is on probation, and as Snape starts to leave, Harry shouts, "he has Padfoot at the place where it's hidden." Snape stares coldly at Harry and tells Umbridge that Harry's outburst was nonsense.

Hermione makes a number of very valid points here, but because Harry is too caught up in his understandable and emotional desire to rescue Sirius, he's unable and unwilling to take any of her questions seriously. Once again, because Harry feels alone and doesn't have enough information to make truly informed choices, he's left jumping to conclusions and getting angry with Hermione for not supporting him fully.



Especially when Luna agrees to help, despite not knowing that Sirius is innocent or being connected with the Order of the Phoenix at all, it shows Harry that the D.A. was successful in helping him connect with classmates from other Houses. Were Harry thinking critically, Kreacher's delight that Sirius is gone would be a red flag—in reality, Kreacher is tricking Harry and is thrilled to be doing so. However, because Harry believes that Kreacher isn't necessarily capable of such a thing, the possibility never occurs to him.



Padfoot was Sirius's nickname at school, which Snape would surely be aware of. For Harry, having Snape tell him he's crazy to his face is devastating, as it means that the one person he thought he could count on to take him seriously isn't going to help him. However, Snape must also stay in character and not reveal that he knows what Harry is talking about, so he has no real choice but to treat Harry like a fool in front of Umbridge.



Umbridge starts to talk to herself and say that she has no choice but to use the Cruciatus Curse on Harry. She admits to sending the dementors over the summer to attack him and get him expelled. As she starts the incantation, Hermione says that they'll have to tell Umbridge the truth. Harry realizes that Hermione isn't actually crying tears, as she sobs that Harry was using the fire to try to tell Dumbledore that "the weapon" is ready. She says he left the students to finish it and they don't know how to tell him. Hermione agrees to show Umbridge the weapon and convinces Umbridge to come alone.

As expected, Hermione is able to prey on what she knows Umbridge is after (proof that Dumbledore is mobilizing students against the Ministry) and, with very little tangible information, Umbridge falls for it. By pulling Dumbledore into her tale, Hermione makes it even more compelling for Umbridge, since she hates Dumbledore so much. Her choice to use the Cruciatus Curse more explicitly links Umbridge with the kind of evil Voldemort is usually associated with, and shows how power corrupts and often leads to violence. Note also how Umbridge latches onto the concept of a "weapon," just as the children did earlier.



CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Harry doesn't know if Hermione even has a plan as he follows her out of the school, Umbridge on their heels. Umbridge asks if the weapon is in Hagrid's hut, and then reasons that because he's a "half-breed oaf," he'd set it off. Hermione leads them into the forest. Harry is concerned when she takes the path leading to Hagrid's giant spiders, especially when Hermione makes lots of noise. When they're a bit ahead of Umbridge, Hermione whispers that she wants them to be heard. A few minutes later, an arrow lands in a tree above Hermione's head. Centaurs surround them and point their bows at the humans. Umbridge looks terrified; Hermione looks triumphant.

Especially now that Umbridge feels as though she's powerful and in control, she feels even freer to use offensive language to make herself feel superior. The fact that Umbridge looks terrified of the angry centaurs confirms that what's really at the root of her hate of difference is fear. Hermione has thus attempted to weaponize Umbridge's bigotry against her, as she knows the centaurs are dangerous and Umbridge is likely to anger them.



Magorian approaches and roughly asks Umbridge who she is. Umbridge squeaks that she's from the Ministry and reminds Magorian that as a half-breed, he could get in trouble for attacking her. Bane mutters angrily as Umbridge goes on about centaurs' "near-human intelligence." She says that the Ministry owns the forest, insults the centaurs, and conjures ropes to bind Magorian. The centaurs charge at Umbridge as Harry pulls Hermione to the ground. Bane lifts Umbridge into the air and carries her away.

Because Umbridge doesn't believe that the centaurs have any power and should be afraid of her and other humans, it never occurs to her to actually fear what they could do to her if they wanted. Their reaction suggests that their anger has been simmering for a long time, and this reaction has been a long time coming given the way that the Ministry treats centaurs.



Another centaur lifts up Hermione and Harry. The group discusses whether Hermione and Harry are young enough to spare, and Hermione says she hoped that they'd drive Umbridge off for them. The centaur shouts that Hermione is already arrogant like other humans. Hermione begs to be allowed to return to school. Then they hear a crash. Grawp peers around some trees, notices Hermione, and asks where "Hagger" is. Hermione realizes he's looking for Hagrid and tries to tell him she doesn't know. As Grawp reaches for Hermione and hits a centaur, the centaurs shoot arrows at his face. Harry and Hermione run as Grawp and the centaurs shout and fight.

This centaur is correct in that Hermione is abusing the centaurs by orchestrating a situation in which they do her dirty work—which, given the way that Umbridge talks about the law, could ultimately get the centaurs in a great deal of trouble with the Ministry. This reminds the reader that even Hermione still has a long way to go as she learns about the diverse inhabitants of her world and learns how to appropriately interact with them and take their concerns seriously.



Once they're far enough away, Harry kicks a tree, thinking that they've wasted too much time. Ron, Neville, Ginny, and Luna appear with Harry and Hermione's wands and ask how they're getting to London. They explain that they broke free from the Slytherins. Luna mysteriously says they can fly, while Ron and Harry try to tell the others that they can't come. Neville insists that they were in the D.A. together, so they should go together. They return to the question of how to get there, and Luna points behind Harry to a few thestrals. More arrive, clearly drawn by the smell of Grawp's blood on Harry and Hermione. Harry relents and tells everyone to get on.

Neville's insistence that everyone should go to the Department of Mysteries shows that he's learned over the year that he can and should rely on his friends to help him when he needs it, just as he now assures Harry that he's here to help him. When Luna points out that they can take the thestrals to London, Harry is reminded that he shouldn't underestimate those around him, as everyone has something to offer.



CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Harry and Neville heave themselves onto thestrals, while Luna helps Ron, Hermione, and Ginny, who can't see the creatures, mount. Harry tells his thestral that he wants to go to the visitors' entrance of the Ministry of Magic, and the creatures take off. As they fly, Harry wonders how long Sirius can resist Voldemort. They fly until after dark, and then the thestrals dive into London. Everyone dismounts and Harry leads them to the telephone box. Ron dials the number and passes out badges with their names and "rescue mission" on them.

The fact that Luna remembered that people can ride thestrals means that Hagrid deserves some credit: his lesson on thestrals was detailed and interesting enough that his students are able to take what they learned and use it in order to accomplish their goals in the real world—which is exactly what a Hogwarts education is supposed to do.



The atrium at the Ministry is empty. Harry leads everyone past the [Fountain of Magical Brethren](#) and into the elevators. They descend to the ninth floor and follow Harry into the Department of Mysteries. The first room they enter is round and black, lit with blue candles and with identical doors all around, and as soon as the door shuts, the walls spin. Ginny mutters that it's to keep them from finding their way back out. Harry says that in his dreams, he goes through a room that glitters. He chooses a door and opens it. There's a tank containing brains inside. They return to the circular room, Hermione marks the door with a fiery X, and they choose another one when the circular room stops spinning.

The revelation that this circular room spins is a reminder that Harry's dreams aren't actually reality. This shows that at this point, because he's lacking information, Harry has a very incomplete picture of what he's facing in the Department of Mysteries—and this means that he's not prepared for what he's going to find.



This room is a courtroom with an archway on a dais. It has a fluttering black curtain, and Harry hears people talking behind it. He whispers for Sirius. Luna says she can hear people talking on the other side of the arch too, but Hermione and Ron drag Harry away. As they leave the room, Hermione insists that the arch is dangerous. The third door they try from the circular room is locked, so Harry tries to use Sirius's knife to open it. The door stays locked and melts the knife. The next door is the room they're looking for. Harry leads everyone between desks to a crystal bell jar. Inside is an egg that hatches, grows into a hummingbird, and then falls back into its egg. Then they enter a room with shelves, all filled with glass orbs.

The fact that both Harry and Luna—two people who can see thestrals—are the ones who can hear people on the other side of the veil suggests that it has something to do with the dead, and is tempting to those who have lost loved ones. This again shows that people who are grieving are more easily manipulated, given their heightened emotional state. The different rooms also give interesting images of what is studied in the Department of Mysteries: memory, death, and time.



Harry leads them to row 97, worried because he can't hear Sirius. They find the row and creep toward the end. Hermione quietly says that Sirius isn't here. Ron calls Harry to one of the spheres, which has Harry's name on the label. Harry reaches out to touch it, but both Hermione and Neville tell him not to. The orb is pleasantly warm, and nothing happens when Harry picks it up. Then he hears Lucius Malfoy's voice behind him, asking for the orb—the "prophecy."

The appearance of Lucius Malfoy tells Harry that this is a trap—what Voldemort wants is the orb, and he never really brought Sirius here. This makes it clear that Voldemort was able to use Harry's love for Sirius and his lack of knowledge about his dreams to lure him here. Now, he's in grave danger without any adults to call on for help.



CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Hooded Death Eaters appear around Harry and his friends. Harry asks where Sirius is, but Bellatrix Lestrange mocks Harry for his concern. Lucius says that Harry has a "weakness for heroics" and asks for the prophecy. Harry, Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Neville, and Luna raise their wands. Lucius tells Harry that he can go home after handing over the "prophecy," which makes Harry laugh. Harry starts asking about the prophecy and says Voldemort's name. This angers Bellatrix and she tries to curse him, but Lucius deflects her curse. The curse breaks a few orbs and shadowy figures emerge, speak, and disappear.

Though Harry has no idea what exactly he's holding, he understands that whatever it is, it's likely the weapon that the Order of the Phoenix has been guarding—and is therefore valuable. In this way, Harry shows that one doesn't actually need all the information to understand what the right course of action is in a situation like this. Because he trusts the Order, he trusts that he needs to continue their work and protect the orb.



Harry tries to step on someone's foot as he asks what the prophecy is. He's taken aback when Lucius asks if Dumbledore never said that the prophecy is the reason Harry has his scar. Harry whispers to Hermione to smash the shelves as Lucius continues talking. Lucius says that only the people mentioned in prophecies can remove them. Harry shouts "now" and his friends all shoot curses to explode the shelves. They race away from the Death Eaters and Hermione seals the door behind them. Harry realizes that Ron, Luna, and Ginny aren't with them.

Learning that the prophecy contains the reason why Voldemort tried to kill Harry (which resulted in the scar) makes the prophecy even more valuable for Harry on a personal level, as it contains information that he's been curious to learn about since his first year at Hogwarts. Note too that as Harry and his friends fight, they rely mostly on simple spells they mastered in the D.A.—which again speaks to the efficacy of basics.



Harry, Hermione, and Neville hide under desks as a few Death Eaters unlock the door. Harry Stuns one, while Neville accidentally Disarms a Death Eater and Harry. Hermione manages to Stun the Death Eater and he falls backward toward the bell jar, but his head passes through the glass, starts to shrink into a baby's head, and then grow again. They run into an office, silence one Death Eater, and petrify another. The silenced Death Eater shoots a silent curse at Hermione and she crumples. Harry manages to petrify him. Harry and Neville decide to carry Hermione out.

Given that this is Neville's first real combat experience, he's doing surprisingly well. This shows that Harry's teaching over the course of the D.A. meetings was extremely effective—especially since Neville appears confident in his abilities, which as McGonagall pointed out, was the main thing holding him back.



Harry, Neville, and Hermione make it to the circular room, and as soon as it finishes spinning, Ginny, Ron, and Luna fall through another door. Ron is unfocused and giggly, while Ginny's ankle is broken. Just as Harry lifts Ron to choose a door, Bellatrix and two other Death Eaters enter. Harry shoves Ron through the closest door, helps the others through, and manages to lock it. Luna and Neville try to seal the other doors in the room with the brains, but Death Eaters break through one. Ron summons a brain from the tank and as he catches it, tentacles of moving images wind around his body. They start to attack him, and won't break. The Death Eaters Stun Ginny and Luna, so Harry runs, holding the prophecy above his head.

The Death Eaters follow Harry into the room with the dais. Harry falls down the stairs and sees many Death Eaters entering from different doors. Lucius asks for the prophecy, but Neville shouts from the doorway that Harry isn't alone. When Bellatrix realizes who Neville is, she performs the Cruciatus Curse on him. Harry moves to give the prophecy to Lucius, but Sirius, Lupin, Moody, Tonks, and Kingsley suddenly arrive and begin dueling the Death Eaters. Harry finds Neville and they try to leave. A Death Eater curses Neville so he starts tap dancing. The Death Eater tries to curse Harry as well, but Sirius knocks him aside. As Harry tries to lift Neville, Lucius tries to take the prophecy. Neville puts the prophecy in his pocket, but his robes rip and the prophecy falls and smashes.

Harry and Neville stare for a moment before Harry again tries to help Neville up. Neville shouts that Dumbledore is here and Dumbledore races down the stairs. Death Eaters run except for Bellatrix, who is dueling Sirius. Sirius is laughing when Bellatrix's curse hits him in the chest, throwing him backward through the arch and the veil. He disappears. Harry screams and Lupin grabs him.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Harry yells for Sirius and refuses to listen to Lupin say that Sirius is dead. He realizes that Sirius has never made Harry wait for him before, so he must really be dead. Dumbledore ties the Death Eaters in the middle of the room as Kingsley continues the duel with Bellatrix. Bellatrix throws Kingsley to the ground and runs. Harry races after her, threatening to kill her, and follows her up to the atrium. There, he hides behind the [Fountain of Magical Brethren](#) and, enraged, tries to perform the Cruciatus Curse on her. It knocks her down, but doesn't continue to hurt her. Bellatrix says Harry has to *want* to cause pain, and tries to curse him in return.

The way that Harry behaves shows that at this point, he's most interested in doing what he can to save his friends and get them out alive. This again speaks to Harry's capacity to love, but he also feels extremely guilty for leading his friends into what turned out to be a trap. Harry, Luna, and Ginny also continue to use simple spells to fight the Death Eaters, and they are generally effective.



Remember that Bellatrix was the Death Eater responsible for torturing Neville's parents with the Cruciatus Curse to the point of insanity; by performing the curse on Neville, Bellatrix shows her extreme cruelty. The arrival of the Order tells Harry that somehow, someone found out where he went; there's someone looking out for him. The prophecy—the object that so much of the plot has focused on—smashes here, seemingly destroying the crucial information that everyone wants to protect.



Sirius's death by falling through the veil confirms Hermione's suspicion that the arch was dangerous—it seemed to be an incarnation of death itself. Because Harry cannot fathom losing his godfather, his love for Sirius keeps him from knowing that Hermione was right and makes this even more painful.



Harry's attempt to use an Unforgivable Curse (which, he learned last year, leads to a life sentence in Azkaban) shows just how distraught he is. However, the fact that the curse doesn't really work for him still shows his fundamental goodness—he wants Bellatrix to feel pain for the evil she's done, but he doesn't enjoy inflicting this pain. His rage is born out of his love for Sirius.



Bellatrix and Harry shoot curses at each other until Harry shouts that the prophecy is gone. He feels fury that's not his own and yells that Voldemort knows it's gone. The pain in Harry's scar intensifies. Voldemort appears in the atrium, points his wand at Harry, and confirms Harry's story. Harry can't even think to move as Voldemort shoots the Killing Curse at him, but the statue of the wizard from the [Fountain of Magical Brethren](#) suddenly leaps in front of Harry, deflecting the curse. Dumbledore appears at the elevators and the two wizards begin to duel. Dumbledore animates the rest of the statues and the witch catches Bellatrix.

Dumbledore and Voldemort argue about whether there's anything worse than death as they exchange curses. Voldemort conjures a snake that tries to strike Dumbledore, but Fawkes takes the blow and turns into a baby bird. Dumbledore puts Fawkes in his pocket as Voldemort struggles with Dumbledore's next curse and disappears. Suddenly, Harry's scar blinds him with pain and he feels as though he's part of Voldemort. Through Harry's mouth, Voldemort tells Dumbledore to kill him. Harry feels ready to die; he wants the pain to stop, and to see Sirius. When he thinks of Sirius, the pain diminishes and Voldemort leaves Harry's body.

Dumbledore crouches over Harry as the atrium fills with people, including Fudge. Fudge sees Voldemort grab Bellatrix and disappear, and he seems shocked and horrified that Voldemort really is back. Dumbledore tells Fudge that there are Death Eaters downstairs, and when Fudge seems ready to call for Dumbledore's arrest, Dumbledore sternly tells Fudge to see sense. He promises to explain things after Harry is back at school and turns the wizard statue's head into a Portkey. He then turns to Fudge and tells him to remove Umbridge and stop pursuing Hagrid. Dumbledore offers to stay with Fudge for 30 minutes to explain what happened, and then he sends Harry away.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Harry arrives in Dumbledore's office. It's near dawn and as Harry looks around, he thinks it's his fault that Sirius died. He feels stupid for believing his dream, especially when Phineas wakes up and snidely asks if Dumbledore needs him to send a message to Sirius. Harry says nothing and tries to leave the room, but it's locked. Phineas tells Harry that Dumbledore thinks highly of him, which only makes Harry feel worse. He feels trapped in his body. Dumbledore appears in the fireplace, greets the excited portraits, and tells Harry that his friends are all going to be okay.

By destroying the Fountain of Magical Brethren, Dumbledore symbolically dismantles the system set out by the Ministry that makes those creatures lesser in the eyes of wizards. Though he has to force them via magic to help here, this leaves it open in the future for a new statue that could reflect a more equal society—and with it, Dumbledore makes room for non-human beings to choose to help wizards in this fight.



In this moment, Harry learns what possession by Voldemort truly feels like. Notably, it's very different than the experience of possession that Ginny described. Note also that Voldemort leaves when Harry thinks of Sirius—as he later learns, it is the surge of love he feels that drives Voldemort away. Voldemort and Dumbledore also show more clearly their differing philosophies here—Voldemort fears death above all else and scorns the power of love, while Dumbledore believes that doing evil to avoid death is not worth it, and love is the most powerful force of all.



Notice how, even when confronted with Voldemort right in front of him, Fudge seems unwilling to believe Dumbledore or accept that he himself has been wrong for so long. Fudge understands he's backed himself into a corner by denying that Voldemort has returned—now, he has to admit his mistakes, which will likely cost him favor and political capital.



Harry must now deal with the fallout of his trip to Ministry and face the reality of the first major loss he's experienced since he was a baby. Harry's sense of feeling trapped in his body can be read as the culmination of a year in which Harry has felt at odds with himself and unable to trust himself or what other people tell him about himself.



Dumbledore tells Harry that he knows how Harry is feeling, but Harry angrily insists this isn't true. When Dumbledore says that feeling this pain is Harry's greatest strength, Harry loses his temper. He shouts that he doesn't want to be human and feel pain, and he starts throwing things in the office. He tries to leave, but Dumbledore refuses to let Harry go until he has a chance to explain. He says that it's his fault Sirius died, though Harry shouldn't have believed his dreams. Dumbledore says that if he'd been open with Harry, Harry wouldn't have gone.

As Harry sits, Dumbledore confirms for Phineas that Sirius is dead. Dumbledore says that fifteen years ago, he figured that Harry would have a connection with Voldemort through his scar, and he suspected that Voldemort would find out about it. Dumbledore explains that he asked Snape to teach Harry Occlumency rather than teach Harry himself because he knew that Voldemort would try to spy on him if he knew how close Harry and Dumbledore were. Dumbledore says he saw Voldemort in Harry's eyes several times, and Harry remembers the feeling of wanting to bite Dumbledore. Continuing, Dumbledore says that Voldemort possessed Harry earlier in the hopes that Dumbledore would kill Harry.

Dumbledore says that Sirius shared that Harry felt Voldemort in him the night he attacked Mr. Weasley, and this is why Dumbledore insisted Harry learn Occlumency. Dumbledore says that Harry dreamt of the door in the Department of Mysteries because Voldemort was obsessed with hearing the prophecy. Feeling guilty, Harry says he didn't practice Occlumency and that he tried to check if Sirius was home. Calmly, Dumbledore says that Kreacher lied to Harry. Over Christmas, Kreacher left the house, went to Narcissa Malfoy (who is related to the Blacks and therefore part of the family he serves), and has been passing information to her since, which allowed Voldemort to set the trap for Harry. When Snape alerted the Order about Harry's absence, Sirius insisted on going to the Ministry too and left Kreacher to speak to Dumbledore. Kreacher admitted to Dumbledore that he injured Buckbeak so that Sirius wasn't around when Harry called.

Harry's anger has been stewing all year, and he really lets it out here. By taking responsibility for Sirius's death and suggesting that Sirius died because Dumbledore denied Harry information, Dumbledore makes it clear that knowledge is power—and that that power can keep people safe and shouldn't be underestimated. In apologizing for this, Dumbledore also apologizes for ignoring Harry for a year.



While all of Dumbledore's reasoning is sound and makes sense, his mistake was in not telling Harry any of this reasoning. Given Harry's desire to leave Grimmauld Place when he feared Voldemort would try to hurt people there, it seems reasonable that Harry would've understood Dumbledore's fear that Voldemort would possess Harry and try to use him.



Now that Dumbledore is able to tell Harry about what his dreams of the Department of Mysteries mean, it makes far more sense why Dumbledore wanted Harry to learn Occlumency and stop the dreams. Again, Dumbledore's reasoning was sound and had Harry known any of it, he would've been far more motivated to practice and learn Occlumency—but instead, he had only his own curiosity and his hatred of Snape to guide him. The revelation that Kreacher lied shows that Harry was acting in good faith, but others around him weren't—and there was no real way for Harry to know that, given his limited information.



Harry feels his rage return and spits angrily that Hermione wanted them to be nice to Kreacher. Dumbledore says that Hermione had the right idea, but Sirius never took it seriously. He says that Kreacher is what he is because people made him that way, and Sirius never gave Kreacher a reason to behave loyally. Harry yells that Dumbledore shouldn't talk about Sirius that way and points out that Snape was nasty and dismissive when Harry tried to ask for help. Dumbledore notes that in front of Umbridge, Snape had no choice. Harry continues to blame Snape for goading Sirius and making Harry's dreams worse, and asks why it's okay for Snape to hate Sirius but not for Sirius to hate Kreacher. Dumbledore answers that Sirius *neglected* Kreacher; he didn't hate him, and neglect can do more damage than hate.

Harry says that Sirius hated being locked up in the house, just like Harry hated being shut up and ignored at the Dursleys' house last summer. Dumbledore puts his face in his hands and asks Harry to let him share information he should've shared years ago. Dumbledore says that plenty of wizards would've raised Harry as a baby, but he knew that Voldemort underestimates the ancient magic of blood, love, and sacrifice. He says that because Lily died to save Harry, Harry is safe in her sister Petunia's house. Harry realizes that Dumbledore sent the Howler when Vernon tried to kick Harry out of the house.

Dumbledore says that after Harry fought Voldemort as a first year, he refused to answer when Harry asked why Voldemort tried to kill him. Dumbledore says that at this point, he should've known better. The years went by and Dumbledore continued to not tell Harry the truth. He says he cared for Harry too much and wanted to keep him happy, and was willing to do so at any cost. Dumbledore says that Harry has been ready for this information for a long time: Voldemort tried to kill him because of a prophecy, made before Harry's birth, that Voldemort heard only half of. Professor Trelawney made the prophecy to Dumbledore.

By speaking about Sirius in this way (that is, admitting his faults and naming them), Dumbledore encourages Harry to view Sirius as a multifaceted individual with faults, just as Harry had to learn to do after seeing James's bullying behavior in the Pensieve. Dumbledore's insistence that Kreacher has been neglected and is so irritable because of this neglect suggests that the first step to repairing relations with non-human beings is to regard them with respect and dignity. Sirius didn't hate Kreacher because he didn't consider him a full person—so Kreacher naturally sought out someone who seemed to value him instead.



Dumbledore's discussion of this ancient magic shows that within the Wizarding world, blood relationships are actually meaningful in their own way. Just as Sirius still inherited his mother's house despite being blown off the family tree, Harry is still protected by his aunt even though Petunia doesn't love him and never will. This conversation also clears up many mysteries going even back to the first scene of the first book, as Rowling continues to flesh out the series' mythology.



The introduction of a prophecy into the mix reminds the reader that in the Wizarding world, there's a fine balance between what's foretold and what people can control through their own choices. It was this information—the prophecy—that Voldemort was seeking and the Order was guarding throughout the book.



Dumbledore pulls out his Pensieve, puts a thought in the basin, and prods it. An image of Trelawney appears, and speaks the prophecy. She says that the person with the power to kill Voldemort will be born in July, and that Voldemort will "mark him as his equal." She says that one of them will have to kill the other: "neither can live while the other survives." When it's over, Dumbledore says that the prophecy could also have applied to Neville, but Voldemort chose Harry and "marked him as his equal" by trying to kill him. He explains that Voldemort's informant only heard the first half of the prophecy, so Voldemort never knew it'd be dangerous to attack Harry. Harry says he doesn't have powers, but Dumbledore says that Harry has the power to *love*. Dumbledore confirms that it's true that Harry has to kill Voldemort, or Voldemort will kill him, but declares that this isn't because of the prophecy's power—it's just because Harry will have to do what is right. After a minute, Dumbledore says he didn't make Harry a prefect because Harry had "enough responsibility" elsewhere.

Though Harry has experienced a number of coming of age moments in this novel and in the last one, giving Harry this information is a major step. Now that he has this information, Harry knows what his future will hold and can plan accordingly. Note that though the prophecy makes several things clear, there's still a lot of wiggle room for Voldemort (and Harry) to make choices about how they interact with it and use this information. As Dumbledore tries to emphasize, even predictions aren't set in stone—and possibly, had Voldemort not known of the prophecy at all, he wouldn't have tried to kill Harry. Overall, this information makes Harry feel doomed but also like he has a degree of choice in how he will live his life.



CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Hermione reads a *Daily Prophet* article—in which Fudge admits that Voldemort is back—to Harry, Ron, Luna, Ginny, and Neville from her bed in the hospital wing. Ron still has welts on his arms from the brain's attack, and Hermione is still in pain from the Death Eater's curse. Hermione notices that the *Prophet* is also running the interview Harry gave to *The Quibbler*, and Luna says her father sold it to them. They're using the money to go to Sweden to look for Crumple-Horned Snorkacks. Hermione is able to say that it sounds like a lovely vacation. They all discuss that Flitwick got rid of Fred and George's swamp and everything has settled down.

The fact that Hermione can act supportive of Luna's vacation to look for creatures that don't exist shows that Hermione has learned something about respecting others and not belittling those she thinks are wrong. Flitwick is an accomplished wizard who could have gotten rid of the swamp the whole time, but he clearly chose to let it remain as both an homage to Fred and George and a hindrance for Umbridge.



They look over and see Umbridge in her bed. Dumbledore saved her from the centaurs, and she hasn't spoken since she came out of the forest. Ron imitates the sound of hooves, which makes her sit suddenly upright, terrified. As Hermione and Ron squabble about the existence of real prophecies, Harry nervously excuses himself to go see Hagrid. He hasn't shared what he learned in the prophecy.

At this point, keeping what he learned about the prophecy a secret allows Harry to come to some conclusions in regard to how he feels before inviting other opinions. It's a choice to keep this a secret, so it feels powerful for Harry and doesn't destabilize him.



Harry can't decide if he wants to be around people or not. As he enters the entrance hall, he sees Crabbe, Goyle, and Malfoy. Malfoy threatens Harry, since Harry put Lucius in Azkaban, and Harry pulls out his wand. Snape breaks up the fight and tries to take points from Gryffindor, but there aren't any points left to take away. Just then, McGonagall arrives and awards Harry and his friends 50 points each for alerting the world about Voldemort, and then takes ten from Gryffindor for Snape.

Now that Umbridge is no longer in charge at Hogwarts, McGonagall can show Harry how she really feels about all he's done this year by awarding him points for telling the truth. Though this is a small thing, it allows her to thank Harry, show him her support, and reinforce that it's important and valuable to tell the truth, even when doing so is difficult.



Harry and Hagrid have an awkward cup of dandelion juice. Hagrid tries to say that Sirius would've wanted to die in battle, but this causes Harry to excuse himself. He walks around the lake, thinking that he feels isolated from everyone since speaking with Dumbledore. Harry thinks that he's not afraid, but it feels hard to believe that he'll either murder someone or be murdered.

Harry is grieving, and not speaking about Sirius is how he feels most comfortable. Again, this shows that when Harry is in control of whether or not he doesn't talk about things, it can be a healing and empowering thing. The prophecy makes Harry feel cut off from his peers, and even doomed in a sense, which is exactly why Dumbledore kept this information from him for so long—he was trying to protect him.



Ron and Hermione get out of the hospital three days before the end of term. Umbridge leaves the school two days later, chased by Peeves when she finally exits. Harry considers skipping the end-of-term feast to pack and avoid the crowd. He finds a package at the bottom of his trunk and realizes it's the gift Sirius gave him after Christmas. It's a small mirror, and the note says that Harry can use it to speak to Sirius. His heart racing, Harry says Sirius's name to the mirror. Nothing happens. He throws it into his trunk and it shatters.

Shattering the mirror symbolically represents how shattered Harry feels after losing Sirius—he feels disconnected from anyone and can't speak to people, just as he cannot speak to Sirius. This is also likely very difficult for Harry, as now that he knows what the gift was, he could've used it to check more effectively if Sirius was home after his dream.



Harry realizes he has one more possible way to talk to Sirius. He races down to the entrance hall and finds Nearly Headless Nick. Nick seems to have been expecting Harry and acts uncomfortable. Nick says that students often come to him after losing someone. When Harry asks, he says that not everyone can come back as a ghost. He continues that Sirius will have "gone on."

Though Nick's explanation feels unsatisfactory to Harry, it's important to recognize that after his ordeal, Harry is now more willing to ask for help. This shows that he's beginning to take what he's learned to heart and can now look to his wider community to help him make sense of confusing things.



Harry wanders through the castle until he runs into Luna at a notice board. She greets him serenely and says that she's putting up flyers, as people think it's funny to hide her things and she needs them back now. Harry feels sorry for Luna and offers to help, but she refuses with a smile. They discuss Sirius and Luna says that she can see thestrals because she saw her mother die. She says that she'll see her mother again, and reminds Harry of the voices they heard behind the veil in the Department of Mysteries.

It's telling that it's only now, in the final pages of the book, that Harry takes a genuine interest in Luna and who she is as a person. This suggests that because Harry is now in a more mature place, he's able to look for others outside of his usual circle. The book continues its exploration of the nature of death, as Luna seems to confirm that the whispers beyond the veil were those that have died. She suggests that Sirius won't really be gone, and this vague conversation is more comforting to Harry than any other he has had since Sirius died.



On the train the next day, Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle try to curse Harry, but most of the D.A. comes to Harry's defense. Later, Cho and Marietta, who's wearing a balaclava, walk past the compartment, looking embarrassed. Hermione hesitantly says that Cho is dating Michael Corner, and Harry finds he doesn't care. Ron asks Ginny if she's not dating Michael anymore, and Ginny says she's now dating Dean Thomas.

When everyone in the D.A. curses Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle, it reminds Harry that he now has friends throughout the school to help him when he needs it. With this, Harry is able to take the Sorting Hat's warning to heart and recognize that Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws will be there for him, despite their differences. Harry also once again decisively chooses his friends over his romantic interest in Cho.



When the train arrives in King's Cross, Ron, Harry, and Hermione step through the barrier and find an unexpected welcoming committee composed of Moody, Tonks, Lupin, Mr. Weasley, Mrs. Weasley, Fred, and George. The group approaches Vernon and Petunia, who are also there, to tell them that there will be consequences if they discover that Harry is being mistreated. To make his point, Moody lifts up the hat covering his magical eye, shocking Vernon. Harry follows Vernon out of the station.

With Sirius gone, it now falls to the entirety of the Order of the Phoenix to advocate for Harry to the Dursleys. This again reminds Harry that even as he loses people he loves, his community will continue to expand. He has lost one of his closest friends and mentors, but he no longer feels so isolated from the other adults in his life.



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